MODERN PARISH PROBLEMS

BY

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WITH A PREFACE BY

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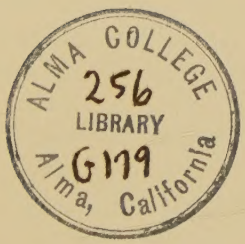

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INTRODUCTION

There are few subjects of more intense and present interest to the zealous priest than that of modern parish problems and opportunities, which forms the subject of this latest volume from Father Garesché's pen. The welfare of parishes is really the welfare of the Church, and the problems which affect that welfare and tend to hinder it must, therefore, be a matter of acute concern to all pastors of souls. On the other hand, parish opportunities are really the gateway to a wider and deeper Catholic life, so much needed in these distracted times.

Considering the importance of the subject, it is remarkable how few books are published directly dealing with the problems and opportunities of our parish-priests. A vast amount of experience is available, but few writers have utilized this experience to formulate different suggestions on so important a topic.

All the more cordial welcome ought to be given to this book in which the Reverend author, whose work has brought him in close contact with the work of parish-priests in many sections of the country, gives the mature and definite conclusions which that experience has suggested. Such a book should find a place on every priest's study table, and, though it is hardly to be expected that every parish can utilize the suggestions in the same way, still, as from a plenteous banquet, each may be able to take what is nourishing and needful for his particular requirements. I, therefore, wish the book wide circulation and the accomplishment of much good.

✠ S. G. Messmer,
Archbishop of Milwaukee.

Milwaukee,
September 20, 1928.

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MODERN PARISH PROBLEMS

CHAPTER I

THE NEW SOCIAL CONDITIONS AND PARISH ORGANIZATION

THE cure of souls has always been an arduous occupation. In fact, any supernatural work requires constant effort. But in our time, as experienced pastors well know, it is harder than ever adequately to reach all the people. It is true that our American Catholics are splendidly responsive to their priests, and it is consoling to see the number of their communions and their many good works. Observant and thoughtful priests, however, constantly realize that outside the circle of practical Catholics there is a wide, vague ring of fallen-aways and ought-to-be's, who are seldom reached by personal methods of parish organization.

Add to this that we have a commandment to preach the Gospel to all mankind. The fire which Christ came to cast on the earth, what wills He but that it be kindled? "Going, teach all nations," is a command as urgent as when it was uttered to the Apostles. To seek and to find the sheep that are lost, is a work as dear now as it was nineteen centuries ago to the Heart of Christ.

THE NOMADIC SPIRIT

Our people themselves, let us observe once more, move and change residence with a swiftness that is disconcerting. Parishes which half a century ago would have been stable and permanent in their population, now change their aspect every half year. Young men and women travel over the face of the country in droves, looking for new occupations, excitement, better wages, sometimes merely for change. Even the elders have a nomadic spirit and wander this way and that from parish to parish.

Then, there is the multiplicity of amusements, of secular clubs, of interests and distractions unknown to an earlier and simpler day. The methods of parish organization which were entirely adequate half a century ago, will break down before this extraordinary change of conditions. If we are to meet modern needs, we must develop new ways of reaching and holding the people. Almost every priest actively engaged in parish work realizes these things. The question is, just what is to be done in order to meet the demand of changed conditions.

It is clear enough that no novel or revolutionary methods are looked for in parish organization. What we have to do is to take existing means and develop and perfect them by adapting them to new conditions. This is always the way of the Church. She adjusts herself slowly to new circumstances, proving each step. Already, comparing decade with decade, we can see a decided advance along the lines of parish organization. It will be a real service to the devoted priests in our parishes to discuss the ways and means in which this advance may be guided and furthered.

THE NEEDED ORGANIZATION

The organization we need in parishes at the present time must be predominantly religious and spiritual, but must have a strong social and even philanthropic side. It must be characteristically religious and Catholic, because only on this side can we hold our people. They all agree in being Catholics, and in nothing else in the world. Any other bond but the religious one will fail in time, while the religious link wears well through the years and centuries.

But the social side and altruistic aspect of the parish organization becomes also more and more important. One reason for this is that social organization and work for others are in the air, and our Catholic people are being constantly reminded by the activities of others of the need for such work among themselves. They will never be entirely satisfied until Catholic social and charitable activities are quite up to the mark of any others. In fact, they are right in this, because Christ brought into the world a new commandment of Love, and the example of the first Christians, as we have it in the Acts of the Apostles and in tradition, points to the absolute necessity of social and charitable organizations, if we are to carry out fully the spirit and commandments of Christ concerning brotherly charity and helpfulness.

USING EXISTING SOCIETIES

It sometimes happens that we look far off for a solution of a problem when the real answer lies just at our door. It is useless to invent new societies, and hope to give them universal acceptance. They may

flourish here and there, but the natural conservatism of our parishes will keep them from being generally accepted. Nor in fact is there any need to establish new organizations if the existing ones can carry the load. In point of fact, we have already in our parishes ample material in the way of societies and organizations to meet every need of the times, if only they are thoroughly worked over, so to say, and carefully directed, so as to do the things that most need to be done.

The first step in this procedure would seem to be to determine and agree upon, so far as possible, what are the most necessary things to undertake through parish organization, besides what is already being accomplished. Some practical discussion along these lines will, we think, be welcome and interesting to every parish-priest. It is extremely useful from time to time to rise above the forest of details, of immediate necessities, the multiplicity of present occupations, and to survey the whole landscape of parochial effort. When we travel on a wooded plain, we may sometimes not be quite sure of our direction. But to get up on some high hill above the topmost branches of the trees, and take wide, sweeping glances over the whole country through which we are traveling, helps wonderfully to facilitate our journey.

WHAT ARE THE WIDER NEEDS?

Supposing, then, that the existing societies in the parish—the sodalities of various kinds, the special groups of a more limited purpose, all the usual array of parish organizations—are to be further devel-

oped to meet wider needs. Just precisely what are these wider needs, and how can they be met practically under present circumstances? The question is a broad one, but it will be interesting to attempt to answer it.

If we were to be required to state briefly the further needs for parish work, might they not be put in this wise? We need to keep effectually those whom we have, and to lead those whom we have not, within the bosom of the Church. Our first duty is, of course, to the faithful flock about us who go to form the visible Church. "Feed My lambs, feed My sheep!" This commandment of Christ must ring in the ears of every shepherd of souls. But next, to our utmost ability, we must go forth and seek to bring into the fold those who wander without, to seek the sheep that are lost, and to bring the light of the Faith to every sincere and well-meaning soul that wanders far from the warmth and peace and plenty of its Father's home.

This terse statement contains the germs of many fruitful reflections. Just how far are our parish organizations, as at present constituted, proving effective for this twofold purpose? In just what ways may they be made more and more competent to achieve it? For, like everything human, our present system is capable of improvement, and zealous priests everywhere are becoming more and more aware of the perfectibility, so to say, of the existing methods.

WHAT OF THE DRIFTERS?

We may take it for granted that the priest, under present conditions, requires, if he can obtain it effec-

tively, the help of parish societies to meet the double need above referred to. The very multiplication of societies is a proof of the awareness of such a need. Reflect a moment on the conditions in most modern parishes, and say whether any group of priests, without organization, can meet them. Some pastors of the older school, good men and true, do indeed consider that their pastoral visitation and personal contact with their people are enough without organization. But they come in touch only with the good, or at least the faithful. What of the numbers in each parish who have to be sought after, who are coy and shy, and do not wish the ministrations of the priest? The more these lost ones drift into indifference, the less likely they are ever to approach the priest. Even in his visits they will elude him. He may, indeed, be quite unconscious of their existence. We have come on instance after instance where priests have been astonished at some sudden revelation of the number of fallen-aways and ought-to be's—of Catholics who have never been married according to the rites of the Church, of unbaptized children, and still more of uninstructed little ones that some parish cataclysm has revealed.

Let us turn our attention, then, first to the task of keeping faithful those who are now good Catholics, or who at least are members of the visible Church. Is there need of more organization to effect this purpose? For answer let us look squarely at things as they are.

THE DIVISIONS OF THE FAITHFUL

We may roughly divide the faithful into the mature and the immature—that is, into those whose

formation of character, general education and Catholic instruction have been completed, and those who have not yet reached this stage. The mature and well-instructed Catholics give the priest the least anxiety and the most consolation. They are fixed in the right way and seldom stray from it. They form the support of parishes, the mainstay of the Church. So far as their personal perseverance is concerned, it is, humanly speaking, secure.

Yet, even this class may very well give anxiety to the priest from the point of view of their helpfulness to others. They so often seem to have little or no realization of their duties and opportunities of spreading the Faith which they cherish themselves, and of helping to safeguard the threatened innocence of the young or to instruct those less fortunate than themselves. From the standpoint of personal goodness, they are admirable. From the viewpoint of helpfulness to others, of active zeal and charity, they are sometimes deplorably deficient. They decidedly need organization, not to keep them in the Faith, but to stir them up to work for others and fulfill the great commandment of charity. Otherwise the burdens of the parish, in so far as lay activity is concerned, will still rest on the shoulders of the very few.

THE IMMATURE FAITHFUL

When we turn to the immature among the faithful, we see also a great need for organization to keep them from bad influences and make them steadfast in Catholic practice. The priest in the parish, constantly in contact with the best of his flock, sur-

rounded with appreciation and goodness, sometimes does not realize the number of young folk who are dropping away permanently or for a time from Catholic practice. Each year a precious throng of children graduate from the parish schools and the Catholic high schools. By tens of thousands they go out into the world after having received devoted care and teaching for years. What happens to them? Ask that question of the priest, of the Sisters in school, even of the parishioners. In many instances, of course, the whole career of the child is known: when he (or she) left school, there began a consistent Catholic life, a following out of good training, which kept him in close touch with Catholic influences, and brought him safe to the haven of religion, the priesthood, or a devout family life which is the vestibule to heaven.

These good and faithful graduates are so numerous and so consoling that they sometimes cause the priest or the teacher to forget the existence of other shadowy uncertainties who were once as dear and familiar, as well known and cherished, as were those happier graduates who persevered. There was John this, and Mary that—what has become of them? They were pupils like the rest, were taken care of faithfully to the very threshold of active life, and were dismissed with the same blessing as the others. But, whereas the care of the school ceased at graduation, the world, the flesh and the devil only multiplied their activities after school was over. These poor little skiffs succumbed to the storm, and, if you could follow them to the end, what sad and pitiful wrecks you would find cast up on the pitiless shores!

A STRANGE TALE

Not long ago we heard the tale of a certain teacher in a parish school, a man who had for years kept the same place, and had seen boys grow older and finish and go out into the world, year after year. He grew weary of teaching and took a post in a great penitentiary in the same State where he had been teaching. What was his consternation and distress, when he came to scan the faces of the convicts, to see man after man whose features he remembered only too well when they were innocent lads on the benches of school!

These poor lads were, no doubt, among those concerning whom their teachers would have had to say, if asked of their whereabouts: "I do not know where they are. You see, some of them go out, and we lose track of them." The ones of whom we lose track are precisely those concerning whom we have most cause for solicitude. Because we lose track of them, they often stray far from the paths of their youth. Yet, who can keep in touch with so many without special organization? It is impossible for any small group of men, however zealous, to accomplish by themselves what could be done with comparative ease by a well-organized body.

THE POWER OF ORGANIZATION

Those outside the Church have very deftly employed the power of organization to keep in touch with the young folk. They lack, it is true, the spiritual power which is ours, but how remarkably they employ the power of organization! The two must

go hand-in-hand, if we are to do our own work in this age. We all agree that God does not promise miracles; nor is His ordinary providence based on constant interference with natural causes. He gives us all the means to do our work, and supplies the interior graces that are needful. Then, giving us likewise the efficacy of organization, He expects us to use the due and obvious methods of organized effort to achieve the work He wills.

If it be true that the very graduates of our Catholic schools need organization to tide them over the dangerous age and fortify them in their faith and practice, what shall we say of those other multitudes of children who should be Catholic—the offspring of Catholic parents, many of them baptized in the Catholic Church, but who are so under-advantaged, as the term is, and so poorly instructed in their religion as to be exposed to the most direful perils both of morals and of faith? To the heart of the priest, what is more excruciating than the thought that so many innocent children, the precious inheritance of the Church, the treasures of the Heart of Christ, are yearly and daily being spoiled, ruined, led astray for want of the minimum of instruction and guidance which could be supplied to them through organized efforts?

KEEPING OUR OWN

Walk through the swarming populations of the slums, and see how many Catholic children will greet the priest. Question them, and you will discover, if it be a discovery, how little they know about the religion they profess. Observe that the very ones who have least chance at home to learn their religion

well, may be the very ones who have to go to public schools where no religion may enter in. What words can express the calamity of the loss of one child to the Faith? Yet, there rings in our ears that saying of an observant, experienced, thoughtful member of the hierarchy who once remarked to us in talking over these conditions: "Father, if we could keep our own Catholic children, all of them, we should inherit the land in a few generations."

Granted that every priest and Sister in the land toiled to the utmost of physical strength and endurance, could they, under present conditions, reach and instruct and save the multitude of under-advantaged Catholic children? Surely not, except by the aid of effective organization of the laity. The more one studies modern conditions, the more the truth comes home that individual effort, however zealous, breaks down before modern difficulties. The same changed circumstances of the times which have driven business, amusement, politics, literature, even bigotry, to organize, must necessarily require the organization of religious work as well. The Church is indeed guaranteed a life to the end of the ages, but the extent of that life—or rather the number of those who enjoy it—depends much on human effort. The weal or woe of many souls rests on the organized efforts we make to save them.

PREVAILING INDIFFERENCE

I shall have something to say later on about the character and nature of the organization that the times seem to demand of us. But let us for the present pursue these reflections, and scrutinize the need

of organization for the benefit of those young folk who have got beyond the time of childhood, but are wandering up and down the land or living in strange neighborhoods, aloof from Catholic influence and association. The number of these is much greater, it would seem, than many priests realize. Students of conditions among young people in many places declare that very many young men who should be Catholics have abandoned all practice of their religion. Indeed, this is in a sense natural when we consider our human weakness and the unfavorable circumstances of the day. Indifference to religion is in the air. Distracting amusements, keen temptations, bad company, allurements of various kinds, draw our young folks away from Catholic practices. At the same time, the very ones who are most tempted are likely, under present circumstances, to receive least help to resist. They are lonely, in so far as Catholic influence goes. The priest never reaches them in his rounds of the parish. Only effective organization can reach and hold them, and, so long as this is wanting, they will continue to drift farther and farther and in greater numbers from the Church.

HOW MANY ARE LOST?

How large is the multitude of fallen-away Catholics we can at present only conjecture, but disquieting circumstances come to notice from time to time. A little while ago, a priest who has been conducting of late a boarding home for young men, remarked to us that in one year 2300 young men applied to him for lodging. Of these some 150 were non-Catholics, and some 300 were faithful to the practice of their

religion. All the rest, to the number of about 1850, had strayed away from the Church and had ceased to be practical Catholics. Such a definite instance would of itself give cause for disquiet. But it does not stand alone. Another priest told the writer that half of the young men of his parish who should be Catholics did not come to church on Sundays, and, when surprise was expressed at such a proportion of delinquents, he declared that if the truth were known such a condition is not uncommon in parishes.

It is a very usual remark that too large a proportion of the population of our prisons and penitentiaries, not to say reformatories and workhouses, are Catholics; and, making every allowance for deceit and false registration, there can be no doubt that the number is unfortunately great. Analyze these instances and in many cases you will find that the reason of the delinquency is a want of good training and good influence in youth. How can we supply this to such a multitude save by means of organization?

A LONG ROAD STILL TO TRAVEL

If any one objects that even with organization we never could meet the greatness of the need, perhaps he has not fully estimated the power of organized effort. In a certain sense, we may almost say that the right sort of organization can accomplish anything that is humanly possible. At least, the more we perfect our methods, the better results we will achieve, and the first blame for lack of right results may justly be put on a want of the proper organization. This much is certain, that with our present system we do not begin to exhaust the possibility

of organized effort. Compare our means of reaching and influencing young people in an organized way with those of non-Catholics, although even these latter are by no means ideal. Had we a spirit of activity and energy to study methods and achieve results in proportion to the greatness of our cause and the preciousness of our Faith, we could outstrip the achievements of those outside the Church.

These things are said, not in criticism, but by way of calling attention to the great field before us. The work of the clergy in the United States has been sublime in its fruitfulness, and with the aid of our devoted laity they have built up a system of parishes and schools extraordinary in extent and efficiency. Nevertheless, the work is not all done, and never will be completed until we put the same thought and energy into the organizing of our forces for these further ends of which we speak.

WHAT CONSCIENCE URGES

It is quite probable that nearly every priest who reads these lines will agree with the general assertion that more organization is necessary in our parishes to meet the needs of which we are speaking. There may be—indeed there will be—differences of opinion as to what form this should take, and what methods it should utilize. But the student of modern conditions cannot avoid the conclusion that we must go forward in our efforts to find new methods for new needs, or for old needs that have taken on a new form and significance. Once we have admitted this, and have considered the seriousness of the issues at stake, our conscience will urge us to do

whatever is possible to meet a necessity which becomes every day more evident.

It is almost emphasizing the obvious to say that the way to find the right organization is by studying conditions, by observing the experiments already made both within and without the Church, and by then doing our best to propose a plan which, though not ideal, seems honestly possible and practicable under the circumstances. Finally, by the exchange of experiences, by modifying methods and adjusting plans to fit conditions, we can gradually rise to a greater and greater perfection. The very fact that more and more interest is being shown in parish organization gives promise of improvement. Slowly but effectively, the Catholic body is reacting to the need of the times, making trial of new ways and developing the old ones, learning by failures as well as by successes. In this or that locality it might seem that no great progress has been made in the last twenty years. Yet, taking the entire total of Catholic action, it must be clear to any one that the work of the laity is becoming more and more important and, in a sense, better and better organized. We priests can hasten or retard this movement by individual influence and effort, but we can never check it if it is in the designs of God's Providence and necessary for the good of the Church. Every one will wish to do his utmost to contribute to the sum of effort which the time requires.

ASKING TOO MUCH

If not a few are discouraged about the possibilities of lay organization in a parish, perhaps it is

because they expect too much and undervalue what is actually being accomplished. When we look at our needs and the greatness of the field before us, it does indeed seem at times that we are doing little. Still, that little is precious, and contains in itself the possibility of much greater things to come. Besides, religious work is very often a triumph of failure. It gets forward under difficulty; it slips back a step for every two steps onward. But it goes on for all that, and its progress is the more glorious because it works so often against the downward pull of human nature. We can be satisfied to expend much labor for results which seem small in time, when we know that these results will last for eternity.

Finally, let us repeat, the task at hand is not to discover new societies, nor to introduce sudden departures from present ways of parish organization. Rather we must utilize what already exists, employ the approved societies, give them better encouragement and more effective ways of action, and stimulate them to undertake the things of greater moment. This is a far more hopeful task than if we had to devise some new and untried means of organization.

Local conditions will, besides, always introduce into the plans of parish organization some element of variety. The general needs are identical, it is true; but they must be met in a diversity of ways in the city and the country parish, in the parish made up of well-to-do people and the one composed chiefly of the very poor. In the one as in the other, however, much can be done through the right kind of organization. Experience proves it, and common sense declares it.

We shall defer to a later chapter the discussion

of the best means of parish organization as evidenced by the various experiences of parish-priests. It would be a fruitful and interesting study to combine and synopsize the results of the many efforts in many places to bring parish organization up to the level of local needs. At first sight, indeed, it might seem almost impossible to combine and conciliate the results of so many different experiences. I trust, however, to establish certain general conclusions which will at least be provocative of thought and help to clarify, if but a little, the scope of so great and so important a subject as that of parish organization.

CHAPTER II

SOME THOUGHTS ON PARISH ORGANIZATION

THERE are two sorts of experiences. There is the personal, immediate contact which a man has with affairs, and this is limited, of course, by considerations of place and time. In our short span we can only have direct knowledge at first-hand of as many experiences as can be crowded into a single life. But there is another sort of experience much broader, though not so satisfactory as to details. It is what one might term second-hand experience—the knowledge one has from hearing others talk about their work.

The observations which we intend to make are for the most part the result of experience, but of the second sort. Parish organization has always seemed to the present writer a subject of immense importance to the Church. As our present system goes, especially in this country, the parish bears a relation to the Church at large comparable to that which the family has to the State. If all is well in the parish, all is well everywhere. The first point of contact with the Catholic people, the most effective place to reach and better them, the strongest influence for their spiritual and even in some way for their social well-being, is to be found in the parish.

For this reason, in the course of somewhat extensive activities, we have always had an interested and an appreciative eye on the work of the parish-priests. We have admired them, their energy, their courage often in the face of difficult conditions, their friendliness with their people, the tireless way in which so many of them keep striving for the good of souls. In the heart of every one who is devoted to the interests of the Church there ought to be a great desire to help the work of the priesthood. "Qualis rex, talis grex," is a principle which explains many things in the spiritual as well as in the secular realm.

It is possible from this manner of observation to deduce some interesting truths and suggestions. Sometimes the looker-on may see details to which those who are in the thick of the work may not advert. In any case, even a mistaken statement or observation or suggestion sometimes proves helpful, because it stirs the mind of the reader to seek the right conclusion or explanation, to rectify the erroneous remark.

It is with all this in mind that we purpose here to set down some reflections on the present state of parish organization in this country and on the future needs and prospects thereof. Our single purpose is to be of use to those devoted men who are now laboring in parishes for the cure of souls. If what we have to say should prove practical to them in either of the ways just mentioned, this will be reward enough.

PARISH ORGANIZATION MORE AND MORE IMPORTANT

We hear a great deal everywhere about the increasing difficulty of keeping up parish societies, and the reason of this difficulty does not seem far to seek. Life has grown immensely more complex and interesting than it was even a generation ago. Those who have lived on into another generation hardly realize themselves how great the change has been, because it has been a gradual one. But let them pause for a moment to compare the American parish in which they spent their boyhood with the one in which they now live. Thirty years ago there were no movies, no automobiles, no radio, no such multiplication of clubs, societies, entertainments, such incessant demands on the time of the people as there are nowadays. Some few places of amusement, theatres or opera houses, were to be found downtown in the cities, but no one thought of having a movie every few blocks or of being able to speed out into the country twenty miles of an afternoon.

In those days it was a pleasant excitement to go to a sodality meeting, to find there one's friends and neighbors, to have a chat after the exercises. All the other nights of the week one stayed at home, perhaps, except for a visit to a friend or an occasional evening at the theatre or a concert. Nowadays for many persons every evening is occupied with some engagement or other. Not one but a whole multitude of societies clamor for attention and time. No wonder that it is difficult to keep up attendance at parish societies, when there is such keen competition on

the part of the world for the time and energy of so many of the parishioners.

Recall, again, that our people are in a state of constant restlessness and change. They go from parish to parish and even from city to city in a bewildering way. Traveling is so easy and opportunity is so general that the young people especially are tempted to wander. When they come to a new city or a new parish, it is difficult to align them with the parish activities. In fact, it is very hard to find them out at all, unless they have been trained to call on the priest and ask to join the local societies. This is another reason why parish societies and organization in general encounter more and more difficulties. Moreover, with the constant development of new amusements, new modes of transportation, new opportunities, it would seem that a difficult situation is apt to become still more difficult. Not easier but harder conditions for our modes of organization seem in the lap of the future.

THE DIFFICULTY MEASURES ITS NEED

Besides, and this makes the discussion still more important, it would seem that the very difficulties we have mentioned contain in themselves a reason for still greater efforts. In other words, the difficulty is the measure of the need. The very fact that our people are so distracted and engrossed in secular affairs means that they need more than ever the influence of religious societies. The fact that they do travel so much, and go forth in such numbers from the restraining and religious influences of home, means that they stand all the more in need

of pious associations and Catholic friendliness in the new parishes to which they wander.

Thus, while at present it would hardly be too much to say that there is observable all along the line a certain weakening of parish societies and a growing difficulty in maintaining them, the valiant leaders of the people are realizing more and more the need, not only of defending, but of increasing parish organization. They are called on for much the same courage as was shown by the general in the great war when he sent a message to headquarters to the effect that, his right wing being driven back, his left wing imperilled and with no very favorable news from his center, he still was about to order an attack!

Fortunately, in the spiritual line, every effort is a success, even though its visible results are but slight. The existence of religious societies in the parish, the constant effort of the priest to develop leaders among his people, his struggles to offset the unfavorable conditions of the times and hold his parishioners true to their religious and devotional exercises, are sure of a certain success; and this success is worth while, though it may not be as complete nor even as evident as the zeal of the pastor desires. The great point is to keep trying, and every failure can be utilized to point the way to future success, if the priest learns by experience and studies the reasons of his lack of achievement.

DEVELOPMENT OF NEW METHODS

The reaction of the Church's organizations to the new needs of the time is always relatively slow, be-

cause it always means, first, the full realization of changed conditions, and then the originating of new means to meet them. It is no wonder that time is required for both these processes. Catholic organization is essentially conservative, and clings to known and tried methods. The Church lives by centuries, not by years or decades as do other societies. But, if Catholics are slow in originating new methods, at least these methods once originated have a permanence and vitality which more swiftly growing organizations may well envy.

The new methods which we need in our parishes must be the answer to the precise difficulties we have indicated above. These new conditions have brought a change in the financial, the social, the religious, the educational, and the economic situation in our parishes. Unassisted by some special forms of organization which will meet these new circumstances, the pastor who is now embarrassed by the change of the times will be in danger of being quite overwhelmed by the press of work thrust upon him.

The difficulty of getting and keeping a correct and frequently revised census of the parish, to take one instance, is becoming insurmountable in some parishes under present conditions. The priests find themselves so occupied with necessary spiritual ministrations, with confession, sick-calls, and other parochial work, that they simply lack the time required for keeping the parish census up to date. In many parishes it would require at least one and sometimes two or three full-time workers with considerable training or experience to maintain an accurate record of the parishioners.

The financial problems of the parish have in like

manner changed with the changing times. In a church where some decades ago a hundred or a hundred and fifty pews sufficed for the whole parish of about that many families, so that the pews could be rented and every one comfortably accommodated, there are now perhaps six hundred families in the parish, and pew renting according to the old system becomes an impossibility. New methods have had to be devised to meet the new conditions, especially in those parishes where the old church must serve a greatly increased population of the parish.

A SHADOWY MULTITUDE

These material problems are perhaps nearer to a solution than the spiritual ones. It is true that in some respects the fervor of our people has increased in recent times. The number of Communions has greatly augmented, and this brings consolation to the heart of the parish-priest. Some forms of organization are even more flourishing than before. But, though much excellent work is being accomplished, and the general attendance of faithful Catholics at the Sacraments has increased, the parish-priest who looks beyond the walls of his church and his rectory must be saddened at times to see how large a part of the Catholic people are aloof from his ministrations. To the church, to the school, to the Catholic societies come those who are already fairly on the way to salvation. But outside this body of the practically faithful there is a great shadowy multitude of which the pastor is made aware from time to time by poignant experiences with "ought-to-be Catholics," who show no interest in Catholic worship and

no fidelity to Catholic practices, and who are drifting more or less speedily away from all real affiliation with the Church.

How large this multitude may be, no one can accurately say, and this in itself ought to give us cause for anxiety. We know that nearly two million children who are or ought to be Catholics, are at present in the public schools, and that the very ones who are thus deprived of Catholic instruction during school hours are likewise frequently deprived of the benefits of a Catholic home. These children are often the victims of proselytizing organizations. Their play time is supervised by non-Catholic volunteer agencies, and this tends to make them, if possible, more indifferent than before to the Church whose precious possession they are. How many of them drift away entirely from all Catholic influence, marry non-Catholics and transmit to their children and their children's children no part of that priceless heritage of the Faith? How many are thus lost every year to the Church? We do not know, and the very fact that we have to give such a reply causes grave anxiety to those whose conscience is burdened with the responsibility for shepherding the lambs of Christ.

Again, the priest who passes through the crowded neighborhoods of great cities, is constantly made aware of the large proportion of Catholic children there by the salutations he receives from every side. The poor who have any religion, are for the most part Catholics—Catholics, that is, in name and even by baptism. But how many of them grow up uninstructed in dangerous surroundings! They have not the proportionate care which their exposed and im-

perilled innocence requires. They receive, very many of them, no adequate instruction in the Faith.

INTRODUCING THE WORKERS TO THE WORK

While he is aware of the existence of this terrible need of hundreds of thousands of Catholic children, the priest is likewise sure that very many of the Catholic people are well-to-do, have leisure, are perfectly able to devote some of their time to the care and instruction of these children, and would be very much the better for some such unselfish occupation. How can he introduce those who should work for the children to the children who are so much in need of care? This is a problem of parish organization which cries to heaven for a speedy solution. Rich as we are nowadays, many as are the possible workers for children, highly developed as the methods are for reaching them and helping them, is it not a pity and a source of regret that we are so long in adapting the means to the need? It has been said that in some districts ninety per cent of the non-Catholic children are grouped into effective societies to keep them safe during their time of play. In the same regions only ten per cent of the Catholic children are thus organized, while ninety per cent are neglected.

The Catholic young people, especially in the larger cities, offer a similar problem no less pressing and even painful. Efforts are made from time to time by zealous parish-priests to get in touch with the strangers and newcomers in the parish, to associate them with Catholic societies, to make them loyal to the parish, and give them a feeling that they are

welcome and at home there. But, speaking broadly, it is the exception when any effective means exist in the parish for welcoming these newcomers. Usually they drift in and drift out again, the better trained among them making the efforts necessary to join Catholic societies or to become acquainted with the parish-priests, but the indifferent or timid merely remaining in the background unknown and untouched, so to say, by the parochial ministrations from the time they come to live within the parish boundaries until the day when they move elsewhere in their perpetual and restless wanderings.

Besides, there exists such an extraordinary diversity in the methods used in different parishes and in the characteristics of parish organization. It would be hard to calculate how many various societies, different sometimes in name but almost always in methods of management, exist in our American parishes. From one parish to another, the Catholic who travels sometimes finds a bewildering change. He does not know exactly what to expect anywhere, until he has found out by experience. Of course, the essentials will be the same—Mass, the Sacraments, and so on. But details of organization vary immensely. In fact, even in the same parish, the advent of a new rector may make a surprising difference. There is sometimes no standard or uniform system of parish organization in non-essentials, even among the parishes of the same locality. One may be highly organized; the neighboring one, hardly at all. One may depend for its activities entirely on the personality of the pastor; the next may be systematized according to the most recent methods of parish management. All this does not tend to at-

tract and fix the wandering Catholic who is not overstrong in faith and practice.

THE DRIFT AWAY FROM PARISHES

Add to this that there is a notable inclination to organize away from parishes. We merely state this as a fact, readily verifiable from observation. A generation ago, the parish was the center of Catholic social organization. The parish sodalities controlled and encouraged most of the lay activities of the parish and the city. Now, count if you can the national Catholic organizations which have sprung up and flourish, excellent in their work and purposes, but which are quite independent of parish boundaires. In fact, the parish-priests themselves can best say whether in their experience the extra-parochial societies have not of late flourished more greatly than those which are strictly parochial.

Of course, the growth of these national societies has brought great good, and in many instances has stimulated the life of parishes as well. But the energies of the faithful are limited, and, unless special efforts to maintain and increase the parish societies are constantly made, these extra-parochial associations, so good in themselves, may draw the life from parish organization. There are only seven evenings in the week and one Sunday afternoon. Not a few Catholics nowadays are puzzled how to attend all the meetings they are urged to assist at, when the whole week's free time is not sufficient, though they used it all.

There is a just proportion in all things, and the parish societies should be able to claim their due

part of the time and attention of the people. Neither would this interfere with the rightful activities of the national organizations. But these latter are vigorously promoted from central headquarters, while the parish societies at present depend on the efforts which the busy parish-priest can spare from still more insistent and urgent affairs.

Yet the parish societies, in many cases, are quite isolated. Even in neighboring parishes they sometimes give no help or encouragement to each other. In fact, a very experienced and thoughtful observer once remarked that, if some large parishes in certain cities were transported bodily to another place by some mighty genie, the people of the neighboring parishes would be months before they discovered the absence. This seems to point to the need of effective unions of parish societies, which will, of course, leave each one to work in its own sphere, but will join them together for mutual encouragement and assistance. Yet, it has been said that among the hardest of unions to effect is one among parish societies.

PARISH-PRIEST AND ORGANIZATION

It would be very desirable to establish some standard, so to say, of parish organization, especially for the guidance of a young priest who comes newly to this form of work. Hard and fast rules would of course be an impracticable measure. But a general agreement might grow up among the clergy as to the lines which parish organizations should take. In the book *Social Organization in Parishes,* the present writer has endeavored to present such a plan, based on the parish sodality, as a center and

clearing-house for parish activities, and he is grateful for the very generous appreciation of many pastors who have written of that effort, which they declare has been helpful to them. Much interest is manifested by priests in the general plan to systematize parish work, and the experience of many will, it is to be hoped, culminate in some such systematization. There is a tendency in that direction, and under the pressure of the great needs we have been trying to indicate this movement may travel faster than many are inclined to suppose.

SOME GENERAL PRINCIPLES

There are certain general principles of organization which any priest may utilize to make any society in his parish a means of more efficient lay coöperation. One of these principles is to divide the members of the society into active committees and to give to each committee the care of some parish activity which the priest cannot or does not wish to attend to personally. In the volume mentioned above, we have devoted a number of pages to the description of the work of such committees, and observation in many places has shown that nearly all the works suggested are being somewhere carried on successfully by a parish sodality. This gives hope that, as the spirit of organization by committees spreads, these sections, as we call them, may lift many a burden from the shoulders of the parish-priest.

The chief problem in such a form of organization is to find or to develop capable leaders for each section, because, unless the officers of the section are competent, the burden will still fall back on the

priest. But it would be worth while for him to spend weeks and even months in developing such leaders, for, when they once take hold, they relieve him of the anxiety of details and the supplying of energy required to make that particular activity a success. In this connection it is eminently true that it is better to put ten men to work than to do the work of ten men oneself.

At present, not a few of the laity who are capable of directing such sections have the impression that their initiative and activity are not wanted by the pastor. They see him attending to everything himself, and they conclude that is the normal and expected state of a parish, that the priest should do all he can and that the rest of the work should remain undone. They see the impossibility of one man or a small group of men attending to the neglected children as well as to those in school, and seeking the sheep that are lost as well as those who come regularly to the fold. But they feel that no initiative is expected or wanted from them, and mentally put the whole responsibility on the pastor who could, they say, get any help he wanted if he asked for it.

In fact, it seems to be true that all organization in the parish depends in great measure on the will of the pastor. If he chooses to do everything himself, he may find the burden too great to bear; but no one will feel justified in remonstrating with him, since after all the chief responsibility and the duty of initiative rest on his shoulders. It is he, and not the members of his congregation, to whom belongs the cure of souls. If, however, he sincerely and persistently wishes the coöperation of his people, he can certainly obtain it in the long run, providing he

uses the right means and takes into account the human element which enters into all organization.

It is equally certain that nothing can succeed in the parish without the pastor's good will—nothing, that is, which belongs to the life of the parish itself, and is intimately connected with parish activities. Both positively and negatively, therefore, the new problems of the time in parish organization concern the parish-priest primarily, and depend on him for their solution. So long as they remain unsolved, the people indeed must suffer, but the priest will also find his work embarrassed, his energies overtaxed, and he will always be haunted by the specter of a crowd of people hovering on the outskirts of his parish activities, who are in great need of the influence and help of the priest, but whom he cannot reach effectively or bring into real contact with the parish without the aid of an organized laity.

CHAPTER III

SOME FUNDAMENTALS OF PARISH ORGANIZATION

PARISH organization is difficult enough at best from the very nature of things. It is an effort in behalf of the supernatural, the unworldly, the otherworldly, and all such efforts go somewhat against the grain of our fallen humanity. Our age in particular, as we have observed, has made religious organization all the more difficult by multiplying secular societies, by catching up our Catholic people in a whirl of distractions, by alluring them into commercialized amusements, so that hardly an evening of their week is free and holidays are taken up by all manner of engagements. Yet, we can counteract all these unfavorable circumstances and make headway against them, if we are consistent and energetic, have a definite plan, and follow it out. Wherever parish-priests adopt a sensible and practical scheme for parish organization, and follow it out energetically and persistently, they achieve good results.

But there is one terrible obstacle to the success of parish organization against which no society, however firmly knit and strongly built, can stand. It has been the ruin of more prosperous enterprises than anything we know of, and it is still devouring good works and undermining fair-built edifices of parish organization like a dragon that fights against

parish organization with unsated ferocity. This atrocious adversary is nothing less than the constant change of policy which newly appointed parish-priests bring into the parish.

At present—and it is a cardinal weakness—there is little that is standard and universally accepted in the organization of our parishes. True, certain societies, like the Sodality of the Blessed Virgin and the Holy Name Society, are widepread in so far as their name and general outlines are concerned. One finds them in almost every parish. But, when we come to study their methods and activities, these are almost as various as the names of the parishes, and they depend in very large measure on the personal ideas of the priest who is directing them.

There are some men who have an inborn gift of leadership and organization. They have a sense of what is practical and what is not, of what can be accomplished here and what will do better there. Some men of this sort receive a priestly vocation and follow it to the great profit of the Church. But the call to the priesthood does not bring with it any inborn talent for organization. Hence, all priests are by no means possessed of organizing power.

THE DEFINITE MINIMUM

If there were any definite minimum of parish organization which every one could agree to and carry on, the situation would not be so difficult. Then when the born organizer came to a parish, he would key everything up to a high pitch of efficiency. But when the less capable pastor, from this point of view, succeeded to the government of the parish, he would

at least be able to maintain a minimum of organization, and so there would not be any alarming difference between the successive administrations.

As matters stand now, however, no one can predict what will happen even to the best of parishes when there is a change of parish-priests. No matter how flourishing the previous administration has been in the matter of organization, the incoming director can wreck it all in a few weeks. Whatever we may say of the lay apostolate, and however we may emphasize—and rightly so—the need of lay leaders, it will always remain true that the parish societies will ever depend on the parish-priest, and it is he who makes them or breaks them by his way of acting.

It is surely desirable, therefore, that the zeal and interest of our devoted clergy should be shown in establishing some minimum of parish organization. It is not necessary or practicable to reduce all parish organization to a standard plan. Conditions vary so much, and needs are so different in parishes that no one could possibly devise a system which would fit completely in every case. But it does seem practicable to find certain minimum activities which ought to be developed everywhere, and the establishment of such an agreed minimum would be a great help to the priest.

Perhaps the suggestions which we are able to give on this topic may at least prove profitable in forming a basis of discussion. Would it not be very desirable that this topic of a minimum of parish organization to be carried on perseveringly through all changes of parish administration should be discussed by conferences of priests in various places, and should be the subject of thought and prayer? It is

surely important enough for the Church in our age to merit the most careful consideration. Perhaps it might be practicable hereafter to hold meetings of the clergy in various centers to discuss and formulate these plans until we arrive at a general understanding.

A CHARACTERISTIC INSTANCE

The matter has recently been vividly brought before our own attention by a pathetic instance of the need of some such agreement. The last chapter of the history of a parish has only lately been related to us. Taken in connection with the previous chapters, it forms a moving commentary on the need of a definite standard of continuity in parish organization.

We shall relate the history here in its general outlines, because it is so typical. There is no danger of any one's suspecting where the parish is, because its experiences have been repeated in so many places. When we add that the events to be described have not happened yesterday, nor the day before, the disguise of the individual parish will be complete. How many parishes have gone through this experience in, let us say, the last ten years! Let the one which we are about to describe merge into the general crowd.

The former pastor of the parish we have in mind was a most persevering and successful organizer. He was not, according to his own account, a man of magnetic personality, but he accomplished what he did accomplish by dint of hard work and perseverance. He had established the parish himself, and

from the beginning it was his ideal to organize his people, especially the young folk. Without any experience in organization, but with great ideas of what could be done, he set out to acquire experience.

This was many years ago, and yet we are moved to pause a moment and remark how many young priests are starting in the same way to-day, full of the same zeal and enthusiasm and full of talent too, but with scarcely any instruction or guidance as to the minimum they should insist on in parish organization, or the methods they should use to achieve that minimum. How great a need there is of the development of what we might call the science of parish organization! How definite is the requirement for specific training of the future rulers of our parishes, both in the seminary and in the parish itself, while the young priest acts as assistant under the tutelage of the experienced parish-priest!

Well, the priest whose experience we are describing had no such instruction or tutelage. He had only a firm conviction that organization was a necessity in his new parish. He soon learned that the people were sadly in need of religious instruction, and that the children in particular were getting into all manners of difficulties, appearing before the courts and giving general trouble, while the young people were running wild, making mixed marriages, and generally misbehaving themselves.

In the innocence of his heart, as the then young priest himself afterwards related to us, he invited all the youth of his parish to join societies which he established. They all joined, of course, almost to a man or a woman. Almost equally of course, they were conspicuous by their absence at the weekly

meetings which he hoped to hold. While the exhortations of the young parish-priest went on *crescendo,* the attendance of the meetings continued *minuendo.* At the end of a few months, one of the societies of young people had melted away altogether, and the other was reduced to a corporal's guard who still came to meetings with a sort of desperate fidelity, and who looked about at the empty benches with rueful eyes. But the young priest was one of those men whose resolve is stiffened by difficulties. He manfully disregarded the defections of the many, and fixed his eyes on the fidelity of the few. For a whole year, he held weekly meetings of a handful of young folk. He gave them a carefully prepared instruction every week. When there was any distinction to be conferred in the parish, he gave it to one of their number. Little by little the other young folk became uneasy, and perhaps a bit jealous. They applied for admission again, but they were met with severe requirements. Each one had to prove his or her sincerity by a period of probation. When they were finally admitted, they stuck.

Inside of a few years the parish, having weathered the period of discouragement and difficulty, turned out to be one of the best organized in the land. There was hardly a person in the parish who did not belong to one or the other of the parish societies. The constant instructions on dogmatic subjects given by the pastor made the people interested and well informed on Catholic themes. Banded together in a strong phalanx for piety and fervor, the young folk ceased to be the talk of the town for their waywardness, and then became a subject of general comment for their piety. Mixed marriages became rare.

In a word, the whole religious life of the parish was surprisingly renewed by effective organization.

So matters continued in the parish until the pastor laid down his office and was succeeded by another priest, good and zealous also, but not possessed of the same energy in organization. There is hardly any need to describe what happened. Indeed, since we are writing for priests, there is no need to enter into the pathetic details of the decline and fall of those carefully organized societies. They required time and effort to build them up, but it is extraordinary how rapidly they fell to pieces. They might have been kept up with a certain minimum of effort, but it would be far more difficult now to raise them from their ruins.

To change the figure, one might compare the building up of any organization for supernatural purposes to the pumping of water into a tank. One must apply continuous energy to store the water high above its former level, but, when once it is on high, it affords a constant supply of energy. Let the tank once be broken, however, and the water is dispersed. One must labor and labor by hand or by engines to bring the water up again to its former level. So it is with parish societies. How much easier to maintain them at a fixed minimum of efficiency than to let them go down and then raise them up again by successive and spasmodic efforts!

WHAT SHALL BE THE MINIMUM?

What then—to return, after this instance in point, to our former discussion—what then is the minimum which might justly be expected in parish organiza-

tion? First, of course, there should be a definite system of societies in the parish, chosen from among those approved by the Church. All that we say of the lay apostolate and the need for organization points to the necessity of parish societies. The religious organization is excellent and sufficient, so far as concerns the administration of the sacraments and the conducting of divine worship. But it is simply impossible nowadays to secure the coöperation of the laity without organization. Hence, there must be some sort of adequate society for the laity in every parish. Local custom often determines what these societies shall be; and it is well to defer to custom, if no reasons exist to the contrary, because the people of one parish will be likely to wish to do what the people in other parishes are doing.

All the societies approved by the Church have their proper excellencies. Some of them, of course, aim at one or two specific purposes; others strive generally to stir up their members to personal fervor which will naturally overflow in good work. Generally speaking, especially in smaller parishes, a certain principle of economy ought to be observed in establishing new societies. Where existing organizations can be made to supply the need, new ones should not be multiplied without due occasion.

UTILIZING WHAT WE HAVE

There is no need to invent novel methods of organization. The great point is to utilize systematically what we already have. The manner of utilizing these societies is very simple. It would be well for the parish-priest to determine in his own mind which

one of his societies shall be the center and clearing place for the activities of a particular group. Right order requires that some centralization should be observed in the activities of the parish. Thus, if the priest finds that one society has better officers or can be supplied with them, has a wider range of activities, and enjoys greater popularity with the people, he can choose it to be the center of his organization. This society should then be organized into committees, each committee being given a definite purpose and work to do, with its own officers (a president, secretary and treasurer and any other officials who seem needed), and its own meetings, whenever they are necessary.

This method of organization by committees does away with a great deal of unnecessary work. If every activity in the parish has to be given to a separate society, with its own independent organization, the work of the pastor will be multiplied in looking after them all. Here there is some diversity of interest between the parish itself and the specific good work in question. It is quite true that this or that definite good work may profit more by being separately organized and getting the extra emphasis which comes from separate organization. But the poor parish-priest will be hard put to it to attend the meetings and keep in touch with the activities of a whole galaxy of organizations, while committees of the same society may meet only when there is actual need, and can often hold their brief sessions at the same time when the society itself has its meeting.

Our people are becoming more and more impatient of frequent meetings. They have so many other things to do, so many uses for their evenings and

Sundays. In the good old days when the chief center of social life was the home, and when people went out very seldom to public amusements, it was a real recreation and a mild event to go to church (or the parish hall, when there was one) for the meeting of a religious society. Yet, in those days societies were comparatively few. Now, with the multiplication of amusements and social functions there has come also a multiplication of Catholic societies, and both these reasons make it increasingly difficult to get people to frequent meetings.

Perhaps the most sensible principle to observe in this matter would be to attend to needs, and carry on good works which do not require a separate society by means of committees of sections of existing organizations, and to organize new societies only when the work proposed really demands or strongly requires a separate organization.

AVOID NEEDLESS CHANGES

Once a society is definitely determined on as a center of parish activity, its preëminence should be respected by successive parish-priests, unless there is some reason for the contrary. Needless changes dishearten and confuse the faithful. When one parish-priest has told them that a certain society is the center of activities in the parish, has emphasized its importance and gone to pains to organize it, and the next one who takes charge shows indifference and lack of interest in that society but proposes some other, the people naturally lose interest. There are several societies which could well be used

for parish organization, but, when one has been selected, perseverance is a necessary virtue.

Supposing, then, that a society has been selected, what is the best means of organizing, and what activities are specially to be commended? The most effective means of organization is, we repeat, by committees or sections of the members. Some committees may be permanent, and these should cover all the essential activities of a parish not otherwise taken care of. Other committees or sections may be merely temporary, organized to meet some passing need and then dissolved when the occasion has gone by.

A really careful study ought to be made of parish needs and conditions before the sections are determined on and organized. It is essential for all well-ordered organization work to get a clear notion of the state of affairs, and this can only be done by a careful survey of the situation. Parishes differ extremely in their needs and possibilities. Large city parishes with greater resources can and should carry through very many works which would be impossible in the country parish. Hence, each must work out its own plan.

Still, it will be useful to indicate certain fundamental activities of a parish, which ought surely to be attended to everywhere. These will form a skeleton, so to say, on which further organization of a parish can be built up. It is usually expedient to begin with a limited number of sections or committees, and then build up on them. "Where shall we begin?" is a very frequent inquiry. These fundamental activities will often furnish an answer. Some organizations are practicable everywhere. Others

are possible only under special circumstances. But, when we consider this rich mine of possible parish work, certain activities stand out preëminently for their usefulness, their general appropriateness, and their actual need. Let us speak briefly of them as a groundwork, so to say, for parish organization.

FOUR FUNDAMENTAL ACTIVITIES

There are four things, in particular, which need to be insisted on for our people. The first is the cultivation of an intense religious life in the individual lay person, and this may best be promoted by frequent and, if possible, daily Communion, which brings with it, more surely and swiftly than any other means, personal sanctification. We shall briefly discuss the methods which have been found practicable for promoting frequent Communion. As all pastors of souls are convinced and aware of the need of promoting frequent Communion, various ways have been provided that have proven practicable under different circumstances. It will be useful to mention some of these.

Another need, often spoken of but far less insisted on in practice, is the need of encouraging Catholic reading among our people and getting them to spread Catholic literature for the benefit of others, both Catholic and non-Catholic. This activity, too, we shall discuss. Third, there is acute need of sociability among our Catholic young folk and for a greater encouragement among them of study clubs and activities for their own improvement. The newcomer in our parishes is too often lonely and neglected, and even the young people who have lived

long in the parish, have not the opportunities of Catholic companionship which they need. Finally, we must interest our Catholic people and enlist them more and more to work for the spread of the Faith, both by the teaching of Catechism to neglected children and by work for the missions both home and foreign. Much is being done in this regard but very much more is still required as everyone will readily own.

These four activities—frequent Communion with all the devotional life which it implies, the encouragement of good reading and other means of Catholic education among adults, friendliness and sociability and self-improvement especially among the young, and the spread of the Faith through catechetical instruction and work for the missions—form a group of fundamental activities for which every parish should be organized. The organization may take different forms in the city and the country parish, and where the parish is large and wealthy or small and poor. But any parish that is not doing its part in these four respects may be justly accused of being "behind the times."

The first of these activities, frequent Communion, is very often promoted by means of a whole society. Thus, the Sodality, or the Holy Name Society, has its regular Communion in common, and this is often well attended. But such a practice, while excellent, is by no means sufficient nowadays, when frequent and daily Communion is the ideal of the Church for everyone. These Communions, once a month, bring to the Holy Table only the members of the societies, and they do this only on one Sunday out of a month, which is far too seldom to meet the desires of the

Church. Some priests have obviated the first difficulty by assigning different Sundays as Communion days for different groups: for example, the first Sunday for all the young ladies of the parish, the second for all the young men, the third and fourth for the married men and married women respectively. This is very good, but not enough. Everyone nowadays should be encouraged to go to Communion every week, and, if possible, much oftener.

The crusade for frequent Communion called the Knights, Handmaids and Pages of the Blessed Sacrament will probably be of help to the priest in this connection. It is not a new society but a personal act of devotion by which the crusader pledges himself or herself to go as frequently to Communion as possible, and to certain acts of devotion to the Blessed Sacrament, such as the attendance at Benediction, at Holy Hour, etc. The name and address of the crusader are sent to the headquarters, and he or she then knights others in turn, explaining the crusade to them, receiving their word of honor and sending their names for the roll of honor which is kept at the headquarters of The Queen's Work, St. Louis, Mo. Leaflets and badges may be obtained from this headquarters, and a committee may be organized in any parish society to promote the crusade, while of course everyone, whether a member of the society or not, can be invited to join in the movement. This activity may be carried on anywhere, in city or country, in large parish or small.

The second activity we have mentioned, the promotion of Catholic reading, likewise deserves to be taken care of by a special section or committee in every parish. We speak continually of the Catholic

press, of the need of Catholic reading to offset that of secular books, but, in point of fact, it is a constant scandal that Catholics do so little good reading, that by far the greater number of our Catholic homes are furnished poorly, or not at all, with Catholic books. Some of the most energetic and devoted members of the parish should always be assigned to a committee on Catholic reading, and they ought to be encouraged and seconded by the pastor in every way, for their task seems to be as difficult as it is important.

The promotion of sociability among our people, the welcoming of the newcomer, and the encouraging of Catholic young people to form groups of study circles for their personal improvement, is likewise of growing importance. We sometimes complain that non-Catholics are taking our young people into their social organizations, but we ourselves do very little to help them. We can never make any headway in this matter without earnest effort, without trying and perhaps failing again and again, until we have found a practical way in each locality; but there should be a committee in every parish which will work perseveringly at this problem.

When we come to the work of Catholic instruction, and the help of the missions both near and far, it is difficult to see how any parish can excuse itself from activity in this regard. The Church works through its parishes, and, even where the parish has no local need for further instructions for its children, it has an obligation to help carry the burden of parishes less fortunate in this regard. None of the precepts of charity are bounded by parish limits, and, though the parish schools are already taking care of some

two million of our Catholic children in the United States, there are nearly two million more for whom there is no room, and who are in many cases receiving no Catholic instruction either at home or at the public school which they attend.

As to the missions, this is surely the hour of God in the Catholic missions, and of all lands it is to ours that the Church looks most hopefully for support for her missionary labors. At the same time we have an immense field in the home missions. There are over a hundred thousand pagan Indians still in our territory, and at least half of our population of whites have never been baptized, while of these most attend no regular religious services. The committee of parishioners to organize work for the home and foreign missions and to coöperate with the Catholic Instruction Leagues and the missionary societies ought to be regarded as an essential in every parish. If such work is managed through committees of parishioners, this will, especially in smaller parishes, greatly simplify parish organization, and prove just as practical in the end. We have mentioned elsewhere the classic example of the priest in a large city parish who remarked to us that he had twenty-three different parish societies, and that a number of them met every week so that he had to attend several meetings on every weekday of the year. It is this situation that we are trying to avoid by suggesting committees.

Many other parish activities will occur to mind, but the ones we have described are fundamental and should be undertaken everywhere. The manner of conducting them will vary according to persons and places. Some parish-priests may find it easier to

form sections in a Sodality or Holy Name Society; others may merely form committees taken from the membership of all the societies. The benefit of a committee system is that it gives a specific work to definite persons, while at the same time it avoids the multiplication of meetings and of unnecessary officers and the division of interest which a too great number of parish societies entails.

If the activities we have mentioned were looked upon by all parish-priests as an irreducible minimum of parish work, and if each successor were careful to respect and sedulously to build upon the edifice of his predecessor, we should see an extraordinary development of parish activities, to the great glory of God, the edification of the Church, and the good of souls.

CHAPTER IV

A POINT OF PASTORAL SOLICITUDE IN OUR SCHOOLS

OUR school system, the object of so much solicitude on the part of the parish-priest, is surely excellent in many ways, and shows a constant upward trend in its organization and methods. This is as it should be, for what can match the importance of the early training we give to our young people? They will carry with them through life the deep impressions and vivid realizations they gain in the class-room. Thus, Catholic education is a matter of acute interest to everyone, not only to the pastor of the parish, nor even to those only who are actually charged with the work of the class-room, but to all who are really concerned for the well-being of the Church. It may be interesting, therefore, to set down some reflections on the subject, which seems to us of special importance to priests.

OUTSIDE INFLUENCES

We must always remember that a good deal of the development of the system of our Catholic education is the result of pressure from without. We are in direct competition with the secular system, and we form a minority, if a strong one, of the schools of the country. The system of public schools is

powerful and aggressive, and anyone who will watch the course of Catholic education can see how our methods, our classes, and the terminology of our pedagogical work have been influenced from without.

Now, one of the significant points about this outside secular influence is that it always has to do with what is secular, and never urges us to any organized effort or teaching for the benefit of religion. The consequence is that we are continually being swayed away by it from religious teaching and propelled in the direction of secular effort.

Thus, the text-books which we borrow from the secular system are at best neutral in so far as religion is concerned. So too the plays, the dramatic recitations, the subjects for essays and exercises: in a word, the whole array of literature and methods devised for the public schools, but often used in our parish and high schools, is decidedly colorless from a religious standpoint.

This should put us very much on our guard, for, unless this tendency is counteracted, it will make for the de-catholicizing of our Catholic system of education. We ourselves have to supply the religious element, and we have to insist on it all the more strongly because the secular influence is so continual. If we mean to preserve the balance, we should lean against the thrust of outside influences, and towards our own characteristically Catholic methods of training and elements of education.

RELIGION CLASSES

One concrete instance of what we have been saying may be found in the classes of religious instruc-

tion in our schools. If every public school and high school had a class in religion comparable in importance to our catechism classes, we would compete with these courses of religion and endeavor to surpass them. If the public schools gave credits for religion and made a great deal of this branch of teaching, we venture to say that our own catechism classes would be far more efficient and more carefully conducted than they are to-day. But religion does not exist in the secular curriculum. It thus follows that our catechism classes are somewhat neglected. We do not emphasize this study enough; there is no paramount importance attached to it in the minds of the pupils. Hence it naturally follows that catechism sinks to a secondary place in fact, though in theory it is the most important branch we have to teach.

A similar phenomenon may be noticed in regard to the Sodalities in our schools. If all the secular schools had religious societies like the Sodality with which our Sodalities would be put in active competition, and if these supposed societies were made an important part of the school life and of the system of training, we should soon be stirred up to emulation, and should reorganize our Sodality with competitive zeal. But because the secular schools have nothing of the kind, our own Sodalities are fallen into a state of comparative neglect. We may as well be frank with ourselves and admit this very obvious fact. Not one in five of our school Sodalities, to put it mildly, is anywhere near its rightful efficiency as a means of religious training and a school of practical fervor.

EMPHASIZING RELIGION

It is only natural that the elements in our training which are strongly stimulated by outside influence, should be the ones most likely to receive attention. It is unfortunately natural too that, when religious elements in training are ignored by the outside system, we ourselves should begin to slacken a little in their exercise. However, the neglect of religious training elsewhere is the more reason for us to set our faces earnestly in the direction of distinctly religious activities in our schools. They are our reason for existence. If it were not for the need of religious training, there would be no good reason for having a system of Catholic schools supported at such great cost of effort and sacrifice. It would be rather sad if, after having gone to all the effort and labor required to build up our Catholic system, we should then allow the Catholic element of our training to become weak and ineffective.

In point of fact, there are some characteristics of our graduates which seem to indicate that our schools still leave something to be desired in the matter of religious training. We say this, not by way of criticism nor from personal observation only, but as an expression of the judgment of many careful observers. Good and fervent as our people are, they show certain defects or at least deficiencies which could be remedied to a certain degree by better training. Let us point out some of these characteristics, and see how they could be remedied through the Sodality.

AN OFTEN-HEARD COMPLAINT

The complaint is often heard that Catholic graduates lack personal initiative and self-sacrifice where there is a question of volunteering for some needed work. They tend to leave Catholic activities too much in the hands of priests and Sisters, and to hold back and remain inactive when they should be the leaders in good works. Thus, there seems to be a need in the schools to train children more to self-sacrifice and active effort.

When we analyze the attitude of our pupils, do we not find a certain selfishness among them, which is perhaps the result of our own ways of dealing with them? Human nature is so constituted that, when much is done for us, we tend to become self-centered and selfish. Unselfishness is cultivated, not by receiving, but by giving—not by having much done for us, but by doing something for others.

Now, every priest knows that the pupils in our Catholic schools have more done for them than any other group of young people. They are the object of constant care and solicitude on the part of their religious teachers, who very seldom demand anything from the children for themselves, but do everything on their part to promote the interests of their pupils. They are constantly giving and seldom ask anything. They find in their pupils many opportunities for practicing Christian charity and unselfish effort, but they give the pupils hardly any real chance of exercising these same virtues in return. By way of contrast, it will be seasonable to emphasize here the possibilities of the school Sodalities.

A SCHOOL OF UNSELFISHNESS

Now, the ordinary routine of the school does not offer much chance to children for practicing unselfishness and self-sacrifice. Everything done by a child at school is done for his own benefit. He is encouraged to study by the offer of prizes and good reports, and by fear of punishment. He is the object of much beneficence on the part of his teachers, but this beneficence points, like his own effort, in the direction of self. The activities of the Sodality, on the other hand, through its various sections are unselfish and altruistic. The child is constantly being encouraged to work for others, for the missions, for Catholic literature, for the catechetical instruction of children, for the poor, and for the dissemination of Catholic truth. Through committees or sections of Sodalists, these works can be undertaken without undue expenditure of time. The actual results of the work are encouraging—so much collected for the missions, so many pieces of Catholic literature distributed, so many poor persons aided, and so on through all the activities of the sections. But more valuable still is the educational influence of the work. Every effort made by the children to be helpful and unselfish through these sections of the Sodality leaves just so much of the virtues of unselfishness and helpfulness in their disposition. They will ripen and bear fruit long after the actual achievements of the sections have been forgotten.

TRAINING IN INITIATIVE

Another distinct need of our educational system is some training in initiative and personal ambition.

Attention is frequently called to the fact that our Catholic people as a whole do not possess the degree of eminence nor the number of eminent leaders that we should desire and expect. In the Catholic hospitals, only one out of ten of the doctors of the staff are Catholics. In law as in medicine, our people do not rise to the top in sufficient numbers. Considering the number of our pupils and graduates, we have not our due proportion of eminent literary men and women. In a word, the aspirations of our young people should more and more turn in the direction of what we have many times described as "the service of eminence."

A similar lack is observable in our graduates when it comes to taking responsibility in Catholic activities. How often do we look in vain for some one to take the lead in Catholic societies, to organize and conduct Catholic good works! It is true, our people are good and zealous, but they shrink from leadership and responsibility. May not one reason be that they have not been trained sufficiently for these activities? Now, a well-organized Sodality should be an extraordinarily effective means of training in initiative. If the director of a Sodality leaves as much as possible to its officers, and gets the pupils to do everything they are capable of, the youngsters will begin to realize that there is a part of the work of the Church for them to do. Ordinarily speaking, the discipline of our Catholic schools is so exact as to be almost repressive. The children have little opportunity of manifesting their personal initiative while in school. But in the Sodality all this can be changed. There, the initiative of the students may be gently encouraged, and they may be taught to do

things for themselves and allowed to carry on their little works even at the risk of some mistake. Their very mistakes may be more educational than days spent in the class-room.

THE PRICE OF EFFORT

To conduct a Sodality such as we have been describing is, of course, no light task. In fact, everything that is worth while in educational work involves a good deal of labor. The easiest Sodality to conduct is the least efficient. We have seen educators who manage the Sodality as though it were a supplementary class of the institution. They oblige all the pupils to attend, and keep them there quite passive at the meetings, listening to a more or less practical instruction, reciting some prayers, and then being dismissed without any scope whatever for personal self-sacrifice or individual effort. Such a so-called Sodality is not a Sodality at all. It is only an extra class, with nothing particular to teach. The children have no active part in it, and sometimes it has the bad effect of giving them a life-long conviction that the Sodality is a rather tiresome devotion and nothing more.

To make the Sodality meetings active and interesting, to have a well-prepared instruction dealing with the Sodality rules and spirit or with some one of its good works, to vary the devotions according to season, and keep the singing and the ceremonies up to the highest standard of beauty, to organize committees to perform the various good works proper to the Sodality, and to hold alert business meetings where reports are received of all these activities, all

this requires real work and personal effort. Yet, only in this way can a truly effective Sodality be carried on in any school.

We have seen school Sodalities where the results were surprising from the standpoint of training for the lay apostolate. The director was intensely active, but his activities were all aimed at getting the Sodalists to work and encouraging their efforts, at training them for leadership and initiative. It is far better to set ten people to work than to try to do the work of ten people oneself. The successful director acts on this principle.

IN AFTER-LIFE

It is instructive to follow up the results of such training. Five or six years afterwards these quondam students are young men and women in the world. They have learned the lesson of the Sodality. They have become active, capable lay apostles. They are still carrying on catechetical work, acting as big brothers and sisters, helping the cause of Catholic literature, working for the missions, carrying on, in a word, the activities which they learned to love while Sodalists at school.

Many of our Catholic young people are absolutely ignorant of the field of Catholic action and unaware of their opportunities, because they have never been introduced to them. While at school, they learned nothing about the practical methods of circulating Catholic books; their attention was never called to the need for catechetical instruction. They never really appreciated their responsibility to aid and pray for the missions. They know nothing of the

work of the Juvenile Courts. They would be at a loss as to how to participate in these activities, even were they aware of their meritorious character and the need for them. Through the activities of the Sodality, slight as they are in themselves, an introduction is given the student to fields of lay activity which can be further explored after the school days are over. The contact is made. The door is open. Thereafter, if the student fails to improve on the opportunity we have shown him, we may quite honestly say that at least we have done our best.

AN INTRODUCTION TO PARISH SODALITIES

Another point of great importance in regard to the school Sodality is that it should serve, though in many cases it does not, as a preparation for an introduction to the work of parish Sodalities. At present the complaint is often made by parish-priests that our Catholic graduates from high school and college are rather less energetic and active in parish Sodalities than those who have not been so favored in the matter of education. They keep aloof from Sodality activities. They have not been trained, evidently, to consider their school Sodality as a preparation for active participation in the work of the parish.

Yet, this should always form an important part of the training given in the school Sodalities. From time to time the director's instructions could turn on the text: "Once a Sodalist, always a Sodalist." Anyone who is validly received into a Sodality really affiliated to the head Sodality of the Roman College, remains a member thereof for life, and continues to

enjoy the indulgences and privileges of the Sodality, on condition however that within one year from the date of a change of residence the Sodalist shall affiliate himself with the Sodality in his new home. This should be taught the Sodalists, and they should be encouraged always to remain active members of the Sodality wherever they may go.

A WORLDWIDE BROTHERHOOD

The Sodality should also be represented to them, not as a mere school society, but as a worldwide organization with its 40,000 different centers scattered over the earth, its seven millions of members all united together by devotion to the Blessed Virgin, and its innumerable good works of every kind, done by the Sodalists in honor of their Virgin Mother. The smallest child who joins a Sodality at school which is affiliated to the Head Sodality of the Roman College, becomes a member of this worldwide organization and can pass from one Sodality to another so as to remain a Sodalist through all the days of youth, during all the time of maturity, until he goes to join the great company of Mary's children who rejoice around her throne in Heaven.

The Sodality should also be presented to children as a personal consecration to the Blessed Virgin, and a life-long crusade of which they become active members when they are admitted into the Sodality. They should be given diplomas as Sodalists, and instructed to have them framed and to keep them throughout life as a visible reminder of their entrance into the Sodality. Everything connected with the Sodality should be spoken of and treated with

loving affection, so as to impress on the students the high esteem which all their teachers have for this holy society of the Mother of God.

Indeed, this attitude of everyone towards the Sodality is of great importance in impressing the pupils with its significance. Nothing should be allowed to stand in the way of Sodality meetings, and they should never be postponed or shortened because of athletic events or entertainments, or for any other scholastic exigency. They should have their time and place sacred and inviolable, and should always be conducted with an exercise of care and effort which show how much the director and all the teachers appreciate and esteem the Sodality.

A CLEARING HOUSE

Then, too, the activities of the school, especially the religious and social ones, should be grouped about the Sodality. There is need of some clearing-house for such activities, some center of direction and inspiration, and this may be found in the Sodality itself, adaptable as it is and lending itself as it does to many forms of organization. In the Sodality will be found the best and most capable students. When something is needed in the school in the way of volunteer effort, it is the Sodalist who should be called to take care of the activity required. In this way sections can be organized and disbanded as occasion requires, while the work of the Sodality goes constantly on.

One sometimes finds in our schools a variety of activities and organizations without much unity or permanence. Some enthusiastic teacher will begin

a work and keep it up for a certain length of time until he or she is moved to another place or gets some other occupation which interferes with the work in question. Then another will take it up and modify it so that one can hardly recognize the original outline; or else it may be allowed to lapse entirely. Thus, the pupils in the course of their school life go through a variety of experiences. Sometimes they find themselves urged in one direction, sometimes in another, so that the composite impression of their school activities is rather vague and wavering.

If the various activities in question were conducted through a section of the Sodality, they would all help to impress the students with the active character of that organization and emphasize the many possibilities of Sodality work. Teachers might come and go, new works might be introduced and old ones decay, but the element of permanence would be the Sodality, conducting all its affairs in honor of the Mother of God, and training its members to exercise self-sacrifice and zeal for her sake.

A SCHOOL OF PERSEVERANCE

The Sodality is likewise singularly fitted to be a school for perseverance. Since it accepts as its members those of every age and both sexes and of all classes of our Catholic people, it is possible for a child to go from one Sodality to another, as we have said, from youth to old age. Indeed, there should be Sodalities suited to the needs of every state of life. The school Sodality should inspire the children with such a loyalty and devotion to the Blessed Virgin

and to her Sodality that they will wish to persevere as members wherever they go. Then, when they leave the school, they should at once be transferred to a Sodality for youths. This would prepare them for the Young Men's or the Young Ladies' Sodality, and, when they have reached a more mature age, they could join or rather be transferred to another Sodality of older men or women.

Very many of the graduates of our parish schools and high schools go forth at graduation and vanish from our sight. With some the Sisters keep in contact: they are faithful and loyal to the school, and they develop into active and zealous Catholic lay folk, or they enter religion or study for the priesthood, and it is easy to keep in touch with them. But there is such a large proportion of our Catholic students of whom the Sisters and priests say sorrowfully: "They go out and we lose track of them!" During the eight years of their schooling in the grades and their four years of high school, we have lavished upon them the efforts of consecrated lives. What a great investment has been made in these children! How precious they are to the Heart of Christ! Yet, how little we do for them that is effective after they leave school! They go out and we lose track of them. But the world, the flesh, and the devil are vigilant and industrious. When we dismiss them at graduation they are waiting for them at the very door.

THE DANGEROUS AGE

The dangerous age is just after graduation, and this is precisely the time when we do least for our

young folk. They find themselves suddenly exposed to many temptations from which they were so sheltered at school that they were not even aware of the dangers in store for them. How well we shall do to keep them in touch with school, to group them into Sodalities, to give them the advantage of Catholic association and the support and guidance of a fervent Sodality!

Of course, it is very difficult to keep the young people together. The difficulty is the measure of the need, let us repeat, and the very influences which make it so hard to keep up Sodalities for the young people should be our reason for insisting on these Sodalities. But the schools could make our tasks much easier, if they were to give their pupils a real knowledge of the Sodality in its simple but attractive elements, a real love for Sodality membership, and a determination to persevere as Sodalists as long as they live.

TOO LITTLE REQUIRED

At present, does the training of our schools do as much as it might for success in Catholic organization? Is not too much sometimes done for the pupils, too little required of them? Are they not often kept in a passive attitude, made the objects of much benevolence, but taught too little practically about their duties to support Catholic activities and to become energetic apostles of Catholic Truth? Our schools are so excellent in other respects that we can afford to acknowledge this flaw, and humbly to make efforts to remove it. If we do all in our power to organize and conduct the right sort of Sodalities in our schools, we shall be taking a long step forward

toward the preservation of the faith and fervor of our graduates, and securing good Sodalities in the parish.

All this means no little effort for the parish-priest and for the teachers in our schools, but it is an effort which will involve in the long run a great economy of labor. As matters stand now, how many pastors toil and plan in vain for the welfare of their young people! They are constantly perplexed as to the best method of keeping up their Sodalities, or preventing the sad leakage which they are more and more forced to deplore among the young people of their congregations. If the Sodalities in the schools were made all they should be, if the spirit of loyalty and interest among the students were developed, it would be far easier for the pastor and for everyone concerned to keep up with Sodalities for older people, and to secure the perseverance of the young folk as active members of parish societies in after years.

CHAPTER V

THE PARISH-PRIEST AND COMMERCIALIZED AMUSEMENTS

THERE is not a parish-priest in the land who would not be well content if he might disregard altogether the vexing problem of commercialized amusements and their influence on the people, and give himself rather to the affairs which more directly concern his priestly office and the care of souls. For these latter things he is trained and he is accustomed to deal with them, but concerning commercialized amusements he finds it hard to form a judgment. It is harder still to know what to do to counteract their bad influence on his people.

Yet, no one with even slight experience can well deny that these same commercialized amusements have a very distinct influence on the people at large and on the Catholic faithful in particular. We cannot close our eyes to the fact that they have brought a new problem to the pastor of souls. In former times the difficulty existed, of course, to a certain degree. Amusements have always played a very important part in the life of the people, and from the days of the early Fathers of the Church until our own time they have been a subject of anxiety to pastors of souls. But our day has witnessed such an extraordinary increase in amusements, such a sys-

tematizing of them and a commercializing of them, that the problem has been immensely increased.

It is impossible any longer to bid the people stay away from public shows and spectacles as did the Fathers of the Church, or to preach indiscriminately against the public amusements as did the moralists of a later age. In those simple days men and women lived at home for the most part, and led an interesting family life. They had no real need to be amused outside their home, and so it was no great privation to be told to stay away from the games and spectacles. But nowadays commercialized amusements, at least in the wider sense, have become a public need, and the purveyors of entertainment are engaged in a business which for magnitude rivals almost any commercial enterprise.

The whole complexion of society has altered more profoundly than we realize even during the last thirty or forty years, and it promises continued development in the direction of systematized amusement and recreation. Labor-saving devices have lessened the toil of man and given him more leisure. Working hours are shortening, vacations lengthening. Even the mothers of families have more leisure, without neglecting their household toils. To take a homely instance, more than one-fourth of all our households are now equipped with machines which wash the clothing of the family and laundries do the work for many more. Homes are smaller and more easily cared for. In a word, people have more and more time to amuse themselves and are not slow in taking advantage of that opportunity.

Add to this, that new inventions are constantly making it easier for people to come together from

long distances for amusement. The rapid transit systems and the automobiles transport the populace from country to city, from one part of the city to the other, even from town to town, with such ease and swiftness that the commercialized amusements can draw their patronage from very large districts. Then, too, the restless spirit of the time makes the people ill-content with an evening spent at home and anxious to get abroad, somewhere or anywhere, for recreation. No wonder that they flock to the dance-halls, the moving-picture theatres, the out-of-door resorts in summer, and all the various array of commercialized amusements.

From the standpoint of the parish-priest, this tendency of the times has more than one disadvantage. It accounts in part for the decay of many parish societies and activities. There was a time when a meeting of a sodality or other parish gathering was in the nature of an event to the people. Even the church services were a welcomed excitement in their lives. They stayed at home most of the nights of the week, and it was comparatively easy to get them to attend meetings, conferences, devotions. Nowadays, on the contrary, every evening is preëmpted. Young and old have, not only one, but several things they would like to do on each successive evening. The consequence is that it is far more of a sacrifice for them to come to meetings and attend devotions than it was for their forebears, nor do the mild attractions of Catholic societies stand much chance against the decided allurements of commercialized entertainments.

But there is another phase of the commercialized amusements of to-day which is still more disquiet-

ing. We constantly hear justified complaints about the evils of the stage and of current literature, as well as of the movies, which are to a certain extent the mirror of both the one and the other. Admitting all the good results of commercialized amusements, we still have grave reason to regret the evil they do, especially to the young who are precisely the ones most attracted by their diversions and excitement. Every pastor can speak movingly of his personal observation of the bad effects of commercialized amusements. They are not entirely bad, not perhaps any worse than those of other times, but they appeal to an immensely larger number of persons than ever were reached before, and the consequence is that they have a far graver effect quantitatively, so to say, if not qualitatively, than they had in times past.

Where in former times well-to-do persons went to the theatre once a week and considered this quite a dissipation, now the whole populace goes several times a week to the movies or to other public places of amusement. Where only the wealthy in olden days could travel hither and thither at will, now the whole world is on wheels, speeding about in search of amusement. Where in former times magazines and newspapers had a moderate circulation and were read by the more leisured class, they now go everywhere and are found in everyone's hands. All this has greatly augmented the problem of commercialized amusements and made it a most vital one to all who have the care of souls.

EXTREMES TO BE AVOIDED

There are of course two extremes to be avoided in discussing this very timely subject. The one extreme is to go too far in condemning commercialized amusements, in criticizing without distinction or mercy. There are some who can see no good in all this vast mechanism of amusement, who only dwell on the evil and deplorable results that flow therefrom, and who take a pessimistic view of the state of society in general, and of amusements in particular. This seems neither reasonable nor wise. The priest who takes this attitude becomes ineffective in his protests and recommendations. The people, listening to his tirades against amusements, merely conclude that he is an extremist, or does not know what he is talking about, because they fail to see, in their personal experience of amusements as they are, that these produce such terrible results or do so much harm as the Father seems to think.

Besides, such attacks and condemnations contain no constructive suggestion as to what prudent people should do in the matter of amusement. There is little virtue in a "don't," unless it is accompanied by a "do." Commercialized amusement, in one form or another, has become an integral part of the life of a normal person nowadays, and we must accept the situation as it is. Besides, there is no gainsaying the fact that these commercialized amusements have distinctly beneficial results. In itself, to sit quietly in a pleasant theatre and look at moving pictures which are decent and entertaining is a recreation superior to many other ways of spending leisure time. People will not stay at home quietly of nights

and read chosen literature, unless we educate them to do so by persevering effort. Even if we did succeed in doing this, an occasional evening at the movies, providing they were good movies, might be a beneficial change.

Again, the reading of current magazines and papers, which is one of the commercialized amusements of decided popularity, is not an unmixed evil. With all their bad features, the newspapers do an enormous amount of good. Even the popular magazines of the better class have to be credited with many beneficial effects in righting wrongs and promoting worthy movements. To give full credit for the good that is in commercialized amusements, is a necessary step toward remedying the evil. There is no use trying to keep our people away from them altogether. The practical course is to encourage them to patronize what is worthy and excellent, and to teach them to avoid what is harmful and degrading. This is a lesson which many of our Catholic people sorely need to learn, and which they will learn best from the pastors of souls.

Not so very many priests, however, go to this extreme of utter condemnation of commercialized amusements. Most of us recognize, at least to a degree, the benefits of these amusements, but there are too many of us, it would seem, who go to the opposite extreme, adopt an attitude of inaction or indifference toward the commercialized amusements, and do little or nothing to guide the faithful or to encourage worthy recreation, to deter them from patronizing harmful amusements and induce them to frequent those which are wholesome and profitable.

The busy priest sometimes looks on subjects like

this with a sort of despair. The material and spiritual needs of his parish take up so much of his time that he is at his wits' end how to accomplish the necessary day's work. Sometimes a certain lack of system and proportion in the accomplishing of parish duties adds to his perplexities. He is encompassed by such a multitude of questions that pertain to his immediate work that he gives up other problems, like the one we are dealing with, as practically impossible of solution, and so leaves his people to do what they like in the matter of choosing amusements without any advice or guidance from him.

This other extreme is just as damaging as the first. Perhaps, it has even graver consequences, because tirades against modern amusements, even though intemperate and not discriminating, at least call the attention of the people to the danger and put parents on their guard by reminding them of their responsibility for the little ones. But where nothing is said from the pulpit or in private conference from year's end to year's end about commercialized amusements, the movies, the reading of current literature, dances and dance-halls, and the public places of resort for exercise, bathing, and sociability, many good persons who would take a kindly suggestion and avoid what was wrong, go on exposing themselves and their children to bad influences when a word from their pastor would have made them realize their duty in this matter.

AN EXCELLENT TOPIC FOR INSTRUCTIONS

Nor does it seem to be a valid reason for neglecting this priestly counsel to the people about the use

and abuse of commercialized amusements that the pastor is so much occupied with other things. For this pastoral counsel fits in excellently with the necessary ministrations of the priest, and can be given in sermons, in private talks when visiting the people, in the confessional, in the parlor, in a word during the ordinary and necessary intercourse of the priest with his flock. In fact, this topic, prudently and wisely treated, will form a very interesting as well as a very salutary theme both for preaching and conversation. We naturally and rightfully shrink from the sensational, and wish to avoid in our sermons the unwise sensationalism to which non-Catholic preachers so unhappily resort to draw crowds and attract attention. But this subject of commercialized amusements has the advantage of possessing intense interest in itself and at the same time offering a very proper and even necessary subject for homilies to the people. We need only to read the sermons of the Fathers of the Church to convince ourselves of this. Many a pungent paragraph in their discourses has to do with guiding and warning their people in this matter of popular amusement.

The faithful sometimes complain that the sermons preached to them are aloof from their own practical life, and give them little direction in the matter of personal conduct. They take away little from the Sunday sermon, they say, that they can remember and put into practice during the week. Give them some true instruction about commercialized amusements, their use and abuse, and you will find that they will remember what you say much longer than if you confine yourself in your sermons to pious gen-

eralities on good conduct. If you can get them to patronize good amusements only and use their leisure time well and wisely, you will have done them an inestimable service and one which most likely many of your flock quite definitely need. For there is no disguising the fact that our Catholic people form a very substantial part of the patrons, not only of good and worthy commercialized amusements, but also alas! of those which are off-color and evil. Who does not know how common it is for a Catholic to devour yellow literature and therefore to support it, to patronize bad shows and to frequent places of amusement where, in the language of the Fathers of the Church, "Christians should blush to be seen"?

To be sure, some may say that the people know their duty in this regard and go into danger with their eyes open. But is it quite true that they know their duty or at least realize it as they should? The spirit of the day is a spirit of license, and many Catholics are carried away by the current, amusing themselves as everybody does without much realization of the danger they are running. The sensible, kindly admonition of their pastor will help to bring them to their senses, and make them realize the peril to which they are exposing themselves and their families in patronizing indiscriminately the bad as well as the good of commercialized amusements.

Of course, the sermons preached on this subject ought to be well thought out, sensible, prudent and moderate. If we give the people the principles which should regulate their conduct in the matter of amusement, they can make applications to suit their own case. The trouble is that so many, even

among Catholics, seem never to have acquired a personal grasp of the fundamental principles which should govern the choice of amusements. Not one sermon, perhaps, but a whole series of instructions on the subject, would be necessary to set them right, and they will listen with assured attention when a topic which comes so near home to them is explained with sympathy and moderation, and with a mature knowledge of the situation.

SOME SUGGESTED HEADS OF INSTRUCTION

Such a course of instructions might well begin with a talk on the nature of amusement in general, its necessity to human beings as they are, and the principles which govern the right choice of entertainment. Some sort of relaxation and amusement is just as needful to most men and women who lead an active and strenuous life as is food or sleep. The Church recognizes this principle in the ordering of the life of religious communities. She assigns as a matter of obligation certain periods of the day when recreation is to be taken. This recreation usually consists of pleasant and friendly talk which entertains the mind and relaxes the tense nerves. Besides, those who are students in religious communities have periods assigned them for physical exercise, and they are given a vacation, usually in the summertime, during which they are encouraged to amuse themselves in an innocent way so as to unbend their minds and thus make ready for another strenuous year of study.

To take recreation and amusement is, therefore, in itself a commendable thing, and just as we are

wise if we select the amount of food and sleep which will keep us most fit for work in the service of God, so we are doing a prudent and meritorious action, when for the love and service of God we recreate ourselves befittingly so as to be more ready for the duties of life.

But the choice of recreation is really a momentous affair and one which has much more influence on our character and destiny than many persons think. It is the use of leisure time which marks the individual character. What we do for a livelihood, we often do, not so much out of choice, as of necessity. But what we choose as a recreation indicates our individual preference. Those who insist on frequenting only innocent and worthy entertainments show that their life is upright and their character good. Those who are careless in their choice of amusement have little self-respect and prudence, surely, while the wise individuals who select entertainments which are really elevating and refined (and these can be found among the endless multiplicity of amusements which are offered to the public), show that they have a right regard for their personal improvement, which depends a great deal on the use they make of their leisure.

In the same or in the following instruction, it would be well to call the attention of the people to the fact that in choosing their entertainments they have to consider not only their own personal interests, but the welfare of their families and their neighbors and the interests of the public generally. Here enter in the principles of our responsibility for others, the duty of giving edification and avoiding scandal, of not leading others into temptation, and

of not giving our approval to what is positively bad. Even where it would be quite harmless for the individual to take part in some amusement, it might be wrong to do so, because the younger members of the family would follow, or because others would take scandal, or finally because one's presence would tend to encourage and approve what was objectionable and wrong.

This is a thing that our people do not realize enough, the influence of their approval or disapproval on commercialized amusements. Entertaining as a business is subject to the laws of other businesses, where the demand controls and determines the supply. If to-morrow, for example, all our Catholic population would refuse to buy questionable periodicals and books and would write to protest to the publishers thereof, would avoid all moving pictures or other entertainments which are objectionable, and would shun all the places of public recreation where anything offensive to morals is allowed, and at the same time would voice their pointed objections to such things, many enterprises which are ruining souls would straightway become unprofitable, and, since these things are done for profit more than for any other reason, our opposition to them would put an end to their bad activities. There is too little sense of personal responsibility among our people in this regard.

It is the priest, it would seem, who has the duty of instructing his people as to their responsibilities toward other individuals and toward society at large. How many interesting and practical talks he could give on this one topic of personal responsibility, of the giving of good example, of an interest in the

welfare of others, of the duty of the Catholic man or woman, or for that matter boy or girl, to help others to be good and to aid in the purification of society and the uplifting of standards of amusement and recreation by always choosing what is best and by avoiding faithfully what is degrading and unworthy!

It is to the credit of human nature that people sometimes find it easier to be good for the sake of others than out of their own mere personal interests. The responsibilities of parenthood have steadied many a wayward character. The realization that others depend on us for their moral strength, gives us more zeal for personal goodness. Now, the part of the laity in saving souls, in doing away with bad influences and promoting worthy standards, especially in this matter of commercialized amusements, is all too little realized even by good Catholics.

Is it not strange that the sermons of our zealous pastors do not reflect more vividly the conviction of priests concerning the lay apostolate? Can it be that preaching has lost for us to some degree its true character of paternal instruction, guidance and exhortation, and has become too much of a conventional part of Sunday's service? To take up topics such as we have been mentioning would put, not only interest, but life and vigor into our pastoral instructions.

CATHOLICS AS ENTERTAINERS

Another aspect of this question which is of increasing importance is the fact that our Catholic people are coming to have greater and greater con-

trol of the commercialized amusements as producers, managers, even performers in amusement enterprises. Not long ago, in New York City, we were speaking to a gentleman who holds an influential place in the moving-picture industry and who is intimately acquainted with the conditions therein. I remarked to him that it was frequently said in print and elsewhere that the amusement world and the moving-pictures in particular were controlled by men of Jewish race. "Father," said he, "I do not know whether you realize how largely young Catholics are getting control of the amusement field. In the moving-picture industry in particular a number of the largest producing corporations are managed by them. The men who established the businesses have in many cases grown old, and acquired great wealth and so have retired in large measure from the management of their corporations. The young, energetic fellows who have worked into their place in the real control of the business are in many instances of your faith. Let me give you examples." He then went on to mention name after name of Catholic men who have come into control of great producing companies, and we were surprised to learn to what extent the industry was directed by Catholics.

The same thing is true, though perhaps to a less degree, in the world of exhibitors of moving-pictures. In not a few instances in our large cities chains of twenty or thirty moving-picture theatres are managed by Catholics. Catholics are to be found in the general agencies which arrange the programs of dancing, singing, dramatics, etc. When we further recall that a proportion of the entertainers

themselves are Catholics, we see that our people have a good deal to do with determining and directing the character and quality of commercialized amusements.

The same observation may be made of periodical literature, which comes in large part under the category of commercialized amusements. Not a few of the writers, artists, editors, managers of newspapers and magazines are Catholics, and all these have their share in determining what shall be the contents of the publications for which they work. The theatrical world is also, though perhaps to a less degree, shared in its control by Catholics, and the places of public resort (some of those in New York are classic examples), are largely controlled in many instances by Catholics.

Courses of instructions about commercialized amusements such as we have suggested, and personal talks on the subject in the course of pastoral visits, would reach the Catholics who have sway over the amusements we have mentioned and others besides, and would help to arouse them to a sense of responsibility and to make the more conscientious search their hearts as to their influence on their fellow-men through the direction of these amusements. By their association with their business colleagues, these Catholics in turn could exert a salutary power which would be even more widespread than personal authority. They could help to create a healthy public opinion among the directors and producers of commercialized amusements which would do more than anything else to raise the standard and to correct abuses.

It is quite true, of course, that the public by its

patronage determines the success or failure of a popular amusement, and the public as a whole, therefore, ultimately controls the situation. But it is also true that the great producers of amusements can sway the public this way or that, and small groups of persons or individuals are often almost powerless in the hands of these promoters of amusements. The people go to theatres or read magazines and take what is given them, good or bad. To influence the producers, therefore, by instructing the Catholics more thoroughly in their duties and responsibilities, would be a great public service as well as a singularly fruitful spiritual and pastoral ministry.

POINTS OF PERSONAL CONDUCT

The same course of sermons and private talks that we have been suggesting, though it would deal directly with commercialized amusements in their manifold forms, would include a great many useful and even necessary instructions on points of personal ethics, none too well understood by many of the faithful. These instructions would probably enter the mind more readily, and abide there the longer, because they were given in connection with so timely and burning a topic which has such a general and practical interest nowadays for ordinary people.

Thus, for example, the topic of the sinfulness of putting oneself in a proximate occasion of sin would enter into such instructions and be illustrated by prudently chosen, but easily memorable instances. So would the question of our responsibility for the sins of others through scandal, coöperation or bad

example. Does it not quite often happen that our exhortations to the people to avoid this or that evil of the time fail of their purpose, because we do not explain enough the conscientious principle on which they depend? We give them a series of "don'ts," without bringing home to them the reasons for avoiding what we condemn. If our people realized more keenly their responsibility for giving scandal to others, they would not so often patronize bad amusements or go to indecent extremes in dress or conduct. Because these things have no effect on them personally, they are too apt to look on them as harmless, quite forgetting their responsibility for others.

The right public spirit and a zeal for the help of others might also be stimulated by such sermons, prudently and wisely planned. Some people look on themselves too much as a class apart, and dispense themselves from civic and public duties as though these did not concern Catholics. Quite the opposite is true, of course. Catholics should be the very best of citizens, and should be more zealous for pure manners and morals, for innocence in public amusements, especially for the protection of the young from contamination, than any other part of the population. What other group or denomination can realize as we do the preciousness of purity and the evil of amusements which offend against it? Or who should have so clear a realization of our responsibilities toward our neighbor and our duty toward the young? Yet, we are too often saddened by the listless apathy of Catholics toward the repression of evil and the protection of youth, while at the same time non-Catholics are working strenuously to rem-

edy conditions which we should be the first to deplore and strive to correct. In such things Catholics naturally and rightly look to instruction and leadership from their priests. Will they rise up on the day of judgment and complain that we have not duly instructed them or encouraged them to take their part in these necessary reforms?

There is a temptation to look on reform movements championed by non-Catholics as insincere fanaticism and to impute personal and selfish motives to their promoters. It is really a temptation, because we have no business going beyond the absolute evidence in judging harshly of others' intentions. Of course, some of these movements are ill-advised and fanatical, but even then the energy of their promoters would be an implicit reproach to us, if with so much light, guidance and incentive and so clear a realization of the nature of evil we did not do our part to stir up our people to take a due share in purifying social life, in right ways and by prudent and kindly methods.

We trust that these reflections, which might be developed far beyond our present compass, will be of help to many pastors of souls in preparing wise and careful instructions to their people on one of the most burning and vital issues of their present-day lives. Such a series of instructions may well be repeated each year, and brought up again and again in different forms and with different applications, as each year new groups of Catholic young people reach the age of adolescence and are caught up in the whirl of commercialized amusements.

The topic requires indeed some thought for its right presentation and a great deal of calm common

sense as well, so as not to go to either of the extremes we have mentioned above. In succeeding chapters we look forward to taking up the various forms of commercialized amusements most popular to-day and discussing them from the viewpoint of the pastor who wishes, as all good priests do, to guide, instruct and encourage his people to a right use and a wise restraint in this momentous matter of public entertainments.

CHAPTER VI

THE PARISH-PRIEST AND GOOD READING

THERE are, we venture to say, very few pastors of souls who are not aware of the need of more Catholic reading, and indeed of more solid reading of any kind, among the members of their flocks. To be over-studious is scarcely a characteristic of Americans in general; among Catholics, if the experience of many observers is to be trusted, the habit of good reading is scarcely more usual than among the rest of our population.

This is unfortunate for more reasons than one. Good reading, and in particular Catholic reading, is admittedly of the highest importance both as an antidote to the intellectual evils of the time and as a food to nourish Catholic faith and piety. If faith comes by hearing, it is surely much deepened and strengthened by good reading, and we need to encourage the perusal of worthy books so as to offset and stem the deluge of worthless publications which floods the world from a thousand presses.

Thus, one of the most useful and effective things that the pastor can do for his people is to encourage them and help them to secure and read good books. Among the many activities which clamor for a share of his time and energy, this one especially deserves his solicitude. It is the priest, worthy authorities on the subject declare, who can do most for Catholic

books and for good reading in general among his people. Moreover, when he succeeds in getting his people to read, he will have solved many another problem which deeply concerns their intellectual and spiritual welfare.

But what can the parish-priest do for Catholic reading? What practical means can he find to persuade his people to secure and use good books? Has experience anywhere shown a method of encouraging this movement that is truly practical in the circumstances of the average parish? In discussing such problems, we must always bear in mind that, important as they are, they must still take second place to the more direct and immediate ministrations for souls which are the priest's first duty. What, under actual circumstances, can the average pastor do in the average parish?

It is only fair to say that there is no royal road so far discovered, no labor-saving method of getting people to read. At best it requires honest effort, and sometimes no little perseverance. The thing can be done, experience proves. It also proves that the achievement will be likely to cost something near what it is worth.

SOME MOTIVES FOR EFFORT

It may be well then, before speaking of methods, to run over some of the motives which may induce an already over-burdened pastor to give generously of his time and effort to get his people to read. To recall the advantages that may be hoped for will make the labor to be expended seem well worth while.

If all the exhortations to good reading, all the

encomiums of the Catholic press, were gathered together as they have been written or spoken by Popes, bishops, priests, and the cultured laity, they would fill many bulky volumes. Good reading is one of the things most frequently encouraged, most heartily commended. A host of reasons have been given why every Catholic should read Catholic books. In season and out of season good men have rung the changes on this theme.

Reading is the readiest means of intellectual improvement. At present a mass of cheap, ephemeral, distracting and innutritious print is thrust into everyone's hands by commercial agencies. Such reading is a waste of time or worse. It is an intellectual dissipation, a frittering away of the power of the mind. To read books which are solid and worthy, is to commune with mature and thoughtful minds. The best intellectual companionship is to be found between the covers of books.

But good reading does more than improve the mind. It gives the individual a distinct source of power; it puts him forward in opportunity; it enables him to take a higher place in society, to deal with more assurance and influence with his fellowmen. The reader is a formidable opponent in argument; he is an arbiter of disputes; he knows definitely things which other men speculate upon. He has an influence which comes from his superior knowledge.

Our Catholic people, more perhaps than some other elements of the population, have need of just those helps which reading gives. Sprung from unfavorable intellectual surroundings which sometimes are the consequence of fidelity to their faith,

some Catholics are at a disadvantage from the educational standpoint. They have not the traditions of culture which one might desire. Without any fault of their own—indeed to their credit, when fidelity to their faith has been the cause of their poverty—these Catholics are at a disadvantage intellectually.

EDUCATION THROUGH READING

The habit of solid reading would supply precisely what they lack. Not long ago we happened upon an instance of this truth. The Catholic man in question had received only the most elementary education; he could read and write and cipher, when he left the elementary school, and went out perforce to earn his living. But he had somehow acquired a remarkable taste for good books. The light literature of the day did not appeal to him at all; but solid reading, the best type of Catholic literature, seemed to satisfy his intellectual appetite.

So he read and read, going through volume after volume, not balking at philosophy or even at theology, which he pursued in English translations. He had a book forever under his arm, and lost no chance of reading even in the intervals of his mechanical work. He read history, he read apologetics; he absorbed like a sponge whatever good reading came his way.

The result was remarkable. Without having ever returned to school or even having had the opportunity for regular instruction, he had become, by dint of much reading, an educated man. He wrote a good letter. He was well informed in various departments of learning. When other young men rushed out of

doors at night for some feverish recreation, he shut the door of his room against distraction, and gave whole quiet evenings to communing with his well-loved books. He was in a way a better educated man than many a college graduate, whose intellectual development ceases with his graduation, and who takes from college no habit of solid reading.

This youth had, of course, by nature a love for reading which other individuals would have to acquire. But many another young man might be induced by proper encouragement to cultivate a taste for good reading. Surely it is worth the pastor's while to do his best for his young folk in particular to get them to read good books.

We might enlarge upon this theme to no end, but the experience of almost any parish-priest will doubtless furnish more moving instances of the need of good reading, no less than of its efficacy. Given a man or woman who is in the habit of reading Catholic literature of the best sort and you have usually a good parishioner. Loyalty to the Faith, interest in Catholic affairs, and ability to defend the truth, the capacity to answer difficulties, these are all results of Catholic reading.

BOOKS AND THE LAITY

When we survey the field as it is, we find much need of the pastor's zealous efforts in encouraging among his flock the buying and reading of Catholic books. At the present time, if we are to believe most credible witnesses, the great majority of Catholic homes are not even tolerably well supplied with Catholic reading. Most of the volumes published

by Catholic booksellers are bought by priests and Sisters. This fact is attested by the booksellers themselves. It is the exception, they say, when a lay person either comes or writes to order a Catholic book. What proportionately few they do obtain, must therefore be given them in great part by priests and Sisters.

Even a cursory inspection of the shelves of secular book-stores will show that our Catholic people do not resort thither for Catholic books. We have several times repeated the story of a recent experience in one of the largest book departments in the land. It covered much floor space in a great department store, and we came in to look for Catholic books.

"Where are the Catholic publications?" we asked.

In answer we were pointed to a corner of the floor where a large and solemn female stood on guard.

"Have you any Catholic books?" we inquired.

"Yes," she answered, "we have Catholic prayer-books."

"Is that all?"

"Yes, prayer-books, beads and crucifixes."

"Then, where are your religious books?"

"All these shelves are full of them."

And so they were. Books on Theosophy, on Christian Science, on the New Thought, and every modern 'ology and 'ism. It seemed that the devotees of these modern cults made frequent application for books concerning them. But Catholics never troubled to ask for Catholic books.

In how many homes does the visiting pastor find even a respectable array of Catholic books? There are, to be sure, some chance volumes here and there,

prizes received at school, of more or less ancient vintage, and gift books purchased by the pennies of some good Sister or some zealous priest to be given to the needy laity. But a worthy collection of up-to-date volumes by Catholic authors, purchased like any other item of home furniture and considered as part of the essential equipment of the house, how often does the pastor find such a thing in his parochial rounds?

Yet, good Catholic books and good books in general should be as much a part of the ordinary furniture of the Catholic home as chairs and tables are. It would be better for the family if chairs and tables were wanting than that they should lack a supply of worthy books. For those things are of use and comfort to the body, but good books are necessary and nourishing for the mind and soul.

HOW CAN WE GET THE LAITY TO READ?

What, then, is the pastor to do to meet this need of his people? How can he with his other preoccupations induce them to supply their homes with good books and to read? Let me make some suggestions which the practical wisdom of the pastors themselves may develop and modify. We shall draw upon the experience of various priests working under usual conditions in American parishes.

The first question which Catholics ask when exhorted effectively to buy and read good literature is this: "What books shall we buy?" The parish priest is in a position of extraordinary advantage for answering this question effectively. He can by using proper means put almost any book he wishes

into the homes of many of the members of his parish. Once his parishioners realize that he seriously wishes them to buy a certain book, they will purchase it in numbers. The following incident was related to us by a Catholic bookseller.

It seems that the pastor in question was very much impressed with the merits of a certain book, which he thought especially suited to the needs of his congregation.

"How I wish," he said, "that every family in my parish would buy and read that book!"

"Nothing could be easier," said the clerk to whom he was speaking.

"Nothing easier? What do you mean? How could I get the people to buy that book?"

"If you act as I suggest," said the clerk, "they will buy it by hundreds. All you need to do is to carry the book into the pulpit with you next Sunday and speak somewhat as follows: 'My dear friends, here is a book which I like so much that I wish every family in this parish to have it and to read it. It should be in every home, and to make it easy for you to secure it I have asked the booksellers to send here five hundred volumes, which are in the vestibule of the church. The price is ——, and you may buy copies as you go out of church.' Then, read some passages from the book which you consider of greatest interest to the people," continued the clerk, "and, if they do not buy out the entire five hundred, I miss my guess. At least we will take back whatever copies are not sold."

The pastor did as the clerk suggested. On leaving the church that morning after the various Masses, the people of the congregation bought every

one of the five hundred copies and many were disappointed at not being able to secure one for themselves. The next Sunday five hundred more were disposed of, and, if we remember rightly, it required a third five hundred to satisfy all who wished to purchase the book.

Perhaps not all congregations would respond so generously. Indeed, it is quite certain that many would not. But everywhere such a proceeding on the part of the pastor would be likely to furnish a most effective means of circulating Catholic books.

If from time to time, when some book especially impressed him as suitable to his people and he conceived the zealous wish of putting it in all their homes, the pastor would proceed something in the fashion just described, he would educate his people to buy and read good books. The profits from such sales, which would be not inconsiderable, might be devoted to some charitable or parish need.

Another plan which for some years proved successful in a city parish was the wholesale purchase and distribution of Catholic books and booklets through a Sodality. Every month the pastor chose some especially useful and interesting book, and purchased enough copies at wholesale to give one to each member of his Sodality. Sometimes the books were cloth-bound and fairly expensive. On other occasions they were paper-bound volumes or booklets. But in the course of a year or two the Sodalists had accumulated in this way quite a respectable library, the nucleus of a collection of books. Once a family has gone this far in the way of gathering good reading, it is easier to persuade its members to go on and complete their collection of books.

BUY-A-BOOK CLUBS

A modification of this plan would be to form a Book-buying Club in the parish, the members of which would group together so as to purchase books at wholesale. Then, every month or every two months, a new volume could be selected for purchase. With a little organization it would be possible to have each member buy a different book, and to give all an opportunity of borrowing any volume that they would like to read from among the list of purchased books.

Many variations may be introduced into the method of procedure. Thus, a Buy-a-Book-a-Month Club or a section of the Sodality may be set on foot, the members of which are each one to purchase a book every month for a year. Wholesale rates may be obtained, whether all buy the same book or whether each chooses a different volume, as some publishers will in either case allow a library discount.

Sometimes it may be advisable to gather all these volumes into one lending library. But usually it seems preferable to encourage the Catholic people to form home libraries by acquiring worthy collections of Catholic books to be always kept on hand so that any member of the family may have constant access to them. We do not realize enough, it would seem, the vast importance of making good reading easy of access. In this regard notably, people take the line of least resistance, and will pick up and read the book that is within arm's reach, when they would never take the trouble to visit a library to borrow the volume.

One of the chief reasons why the ephemeral literature of the day finds its way into everyone's hands is the extraordinary facility with which it can be had always and everywhere. In cities and small towns, on trains and street cars, at news-stands and drug stores, in department stores, in railroad stations, everywhere that crowds congregate or people pass in numbers, the best sellers and the lurid magazines are offered for sale.

Catholic books, on the other hand, are kept carefully ("kept" is the word) in out-of-the-way places, in well-locked bookcases, away from the crowds, where only priests and Sisters can find them. It requires an expert to discover them. When they are published, notices are sent out to comparatively few. There is no means of making them available to the public—the true public, the many-headed. This is the condition which we must recognize and correct if we are to have many readers of Catholic books.

AN EFFECTIVE MEANS

There is still another means ready at the pastor's hand, which will, we think, prove yet more effective in encouraging Catholic reading both for the present and for the future. At first sight, it may seem somewhat utopian, but with due effort it may be made extremely practical. It will at least lay the foundation for much future good.

The means is this: encourage the pupils in our Catholic schools actually to buy and to possess at least some Catholic volumes which will be their very own, the beginning of their own library, and the nucleus of the books they will gather in days to

come. Could we get each Catholic child to buy even one book a year of its own accord, to be its own property, we should be doing wonders for Catholic reading in Catholic homes.

The task may not be so difficult as it seems. If presented to the children in the right light, with the motives which will appeal to them, the purchase of a book each year may be made desirable to them. If they wish to do so, they can in various ways secure the price of a book each year.

Children like to imitate their elders, to be considered as growing up, to be given a character of their own. The purchase of a book may be represented to them as a very "grown-up" proceeding. It will give them a feeling of added importance to realize that they can begin to build a library of their very own. It is this aspect of the matter which should be most insisted upon, when encouraging them to buy a book a year or a book every semester, or even more frequently according to their financial ability and the grade in which they are studying. It is not the mere separate act of buying one book with their own money that makes the plan valuable and significant. It is the persuading the child to buy a book at regular intervals, with the definite purpose of laying the foundation of a collection of books which will be its very possession.

As to difficulties which may attend the process of persuasion, they will vanish away if once the teachers in our schools are convinced of the usefulness of getting the children to buy their own Catholic books. Some years ago, before interest in the missions had grown so great, it was at times discouraging to urge upon our schools the organization of groups of stu-

dents to help the missions. Now, with surprising rapidity, our Catholic students have been set to work by hundreds of thousands in aid of the missions. In a similar way they might be enlisted to work for Catholic literature, and the result would be no less excellent in its way than is their present zeal for the missions. Nor need the one work interfere with the other.

THEIR SCANT INTEREST

At present, it is a matter of continual comment that the graduates of our Catholic schools show so little interest in any form of Catholic reading, or indeed of solid reading in general, after they have left the precincts of school. While in the classes, they are encouraged and admonished to read, and good books are supplied for them. But many of them seem not to acquire that personal initiative, that individual desire for good reading, which will be strong enough to resist the temptations of life after school. Once out in the world, they either read not at all (except the daily paper or very light literature), or their reading follows the average current of those about them, and they care nothing and think nothing—nay, sometimes even they know nothing—of Catholic books.

This attitude may be natural, but it is not very praiseworthy. Evidently, though, some very definite measure will have to be taken to change conditions. May not something be wanting in the training of our Catholic schools in this regard, excellent as it is in so many other aspects? This plan of getting the children to buy for themselves a book a year (or semester or month), gives promise perhaps, under

specially favorable conditions, of cultivating in them more definite ambitions to be readers, to have books of their own, to build up their own personal library.

There are various ways in which the children may be helped to buy their books. A book club may be formed in the classes, and, where some of the children are very poor and others better off, a general fund may be formed to buy books. Each child may give what it can, penny collections being taken up from time to time; the children are meanwhile encouraged to earn little sums of money and give it to the fund. Then, when enough is saved to buy a book for each member of the class, a volume may be chosen, a wholesale price obtained, and everyone will receive a book. These books should be chosen very carefully and should be of permament value—the sort of volumes which can serve as life-long friends and companions.

Other ways of gathering money may be used, but it is best to get the children themselves to save and give out their own money. Youngsters have various ways of earning—by running errands, and what not. The effect will be much better, if they learn to give their own money to buy their own books. At present, the almost universal attitude of Catholic layfolk is that Catholic books are something, not to be purchased, but to be received as an occasional gift. This attitude may in some measure be due to the fact that Catholic books are, for the most part, bought and given by priests and Sisters. Once the children learn to buy their own books, this attitude, so foolish and injurious to Catholic literature, will give place to a reasonable willingness in our layfolk to buy books for themselves.

READING CIRCLES AND STUDY CLUBS

Another means for getting Catholics to read that is very effective in the hands of the active pastor, is the establishment of reading circles and study clubs, which will form an interesting activity in the parish societies. Cultural influences fail sometimes to receive their due share of attention in the parish. We recall that curious instance of the Protestant committee in one of our large cities, who carefully examined the Catholic diocesan organ, and complained that, whereas during the course of the year the Catholic parishes had announced some five hundred card-parties, socials, minstrel shows and other entertainments, only a paltry half-dozen of lectures and study circles had been reported in the same columns during the same period.

No doubt, the entertainments above-mentioned were good and salutary in their influence, and it is no slight benefit to bring our Catholic young folk together in this way for sociability and friendliness. But one might desire a greater proportion of cultural activities as well. The pennyworth of bread is too little for such an intolerable deal of sack.

Reading circles and study clubs are notoriously difficult to keep up, and perhaps the very apprehension of the difficulty makes some pastors despair of managing them successfully. But even a partial success is a wholesome reaction against present tendencies. Here again the difficulty is the measure of the need. Such activities would not be so necessary, if they were not so arduous. Again, is it not true that we fail sometimes to give our young people due credit for their capacity for higher things? One

reason why they remain on a low level of culture is that their elders take it for granted that they will refuse to go any higher. In point of fact, the young folk of to-day are realizing more and more the advantage of knowing just a little more than the other fellow. Night schools are crowded, and colleges never before had so large an attendance. By appealing to their ambition and desire for self-improvement, by showing them how much such activities will make for personal efficiency and success, we can get the best of our Catholic young folk to give up something of the whirl of amusement and pleasure for the sake of studies which will lift them up above the ordinary level.

The thing is worth while trying everywhere. In country places, such study clubs may be divided into neighborhood groups for reading, discussion, criticism, and appreciation of Catholic books. Debates may be organized; book talks may be held; each group can act as a unit, and from time to time it may be possible to gather all together for some special occasion. The coming of the automobile has greatly shortened distances. Perhaps the commercialized amusements have profited more from this than have cultural activities such as we suggest.

In the city parish there may be more competition; but distances are shorter, and it is possible for the young folk to get together much more readily. With some urging and inducement, it should be practicable to form at least small circles of readers and students of Catholic literature. Numbers are not the only test of success in such a matter. A group of five or six young men and women who are really in earnest, will be worth while working and planning for.

Some years ago these study clubs and reading circles were all the rage. Now they seem to have fallen into neglect and desuetude—the more the pity, because they were a needed element in the training of our young folk. Pastors of souls will do a great service to their people by reviving this excellent practice of encouraging study clubs and reading circles.

THE BOOK TALK

The book talk is a form of combined study and entertainment which presents notable advantages. It consists in assigning interesting books to each of six or seven members of the circle. Every person thus appointed studies his book and its author, and prepares a ten minutes' talk. He also selects some specially interesting passages to read aloud for a few moments after his talk. When the members and guests are assembled, each in turn gives his talk and readings. Sometimes, by arrangement with the public library or with a Catholic library, copies of the book are on hand for lending to those who wish to read further.

We have no space left to speak of the parish library, of the Sodality library, or of the library which each class-room may profitably possess for free circulation among the pupils. All of these are of great moment, and all deserve some share of the pastor's care and attention either in person or by proxy. Following the general principle that the easier of access Catholic reading is made, the more copious the supply of books, and the closer they are brought to everyone's elbow, the more good reading will be done, it is clear that to make books accessible

is the shortest cut to good reading. If our people found Catholic books everywhere as they find the six "best sellers" and the sex magazines, they would read more good literature. Nor should these libraries be confined to books which treat of Catholic topics. They should offer the choicest of secular literature as well.

We trust that the foregoing suggestions may prove helpful at least in calling attention to the very real and immediate need of promoting more reading among our people, and to the important part which the pastor has to play in the matter. Conditions differ very greatly in different parishes and so do the personal inclinations and aptitudes of workers. But any one, anywhere, may find at hand some means of calling attention to the need of Catholic reading and of getting at least a few of his flock to read. Multiplied by the number of Catholic parishes in the land, the sum total of result from these zealous efforts will be great indeed. The thought of so splendid a harvest will encourage each laborer in the vineyard to cultivate his corner with unwearying care.

CHAPTER VII

WHAT A PARISH-PRIEST CAN DO FOR HIS YOUNG MEN

PARISH life, like every other department of human activity, grows more and more complex and various in its demands upon the time of the busy pastor. The church and the rectory, the school, the visiting of the sick, require so many hours every day that life seems all too short for the tasks that offer. Even with system and industry, it is difficult to cover the field adequately, and the very press of occupations is responsible for the seeming neglect of some notably important elements of Catholic activity. Particularly is the work for the young men in the parish likely to fall behind, not for lack of good will, interest, or appreciation of the need, but simply for want of time and energy to do all that should be done.

There are few parish-priests in the United States who have not in the background of their thoughts an abiding concern for the young men. From time to time the problem reasserts itself in various forms. The children are taken care of in the schools. Young ladies show more natural inclination to group themselves into Sodalities and devout associations. But the young man is a shy creature and difficult to deal with. He has a tendency to keep in the background where religious ceremonies are concerned.

He haunts the rear seats at Mass, or stands in the back of the church during the services.

THE DEVOTION OF MEN

Yet, the Catholic young man, especially if he be a graduate of the parish school, is not without his capacity for true piety. The disposition toward piety in young men is on the increase. Some years ago a most observant and experienced member of the Hierarchy remarked to me: "Men and young men are becoming more and more inclined to be devout. Properly dealt with, they incline to frequent Communion. There has been a great increase of late years in the devotion of men. If only we treated them in the right way, we should see great outward manifestations of manly piety."

While the Catholic societies for men have done much in the way of promoting manly devotion, every parish-priest knows, however, that much remains to be accomplished in the way of keeping in touch with Catholic young men. As was already remarked, the stays and safeguards of former years have been broken. Modern conditions have weakened or destroyed the influence of the home. The commercialized amusements draw young folk out-of-doors night after night. A very great number of young people leave home entirely and wander from place to place, seeking better employment or more amusement, changing their habitations at the whim of the moment, and roaming up and down the face of the land.

THREE GROUPS OF YOUNG MEN

In almost every parish, therefore, one finds several classes of Catholic young men. There are those who are in close touch with the pastor, and who are ready to join Catholic societies and help in the work of the parish. This group is unfortunately rather small in most parishes, and is usually made up entirely of graduates of the parish school. These young men are not a cause of anxiety to the pastor, but rather a consolation to him. They commonly have good Catholic homes and are surrounded by salutary influences, and, if they go astray, can easily be brought back to their duties.

Another and larger group of Catholic young men are faithful to their religious duties. Loyal Catholics, they have received a good Catholic training, but are not in very close touch with the pastor or with the activities of the parish. They may belong to the local body of some national Catholic society or even to the parish societies for men, but they do not take a leading part in these nor show very much active interest in parish affairs. Their preoccupations in business, their natural diffidence when it comes to visiting the priest, or other causes, may be responsible for this comparative aloofness. But it exists and must be taken account of. This class is usually much more considerable than the first, though its members may be drawn into closer contact with the pastor if he takes due measures therefor.

The third group offers the most serious problem. It is composed of those young men who are or should be Catholics, but who show varying degrees of aloof-

ness from Catholic practice. Some of them still discharge the bare essentials of their Catholic duties; a great many have entirely ceased the practice of their religion. It is difficult for the pastor to estimate the number of this group for the reason that they are so elusive and keep so far away from the church. I have had parish-priests assure me that it was their conviction that at least one-half of the Catholic young men in their parish never went to church on Sunday. No doubt, this was an unusual proportion. Yet, considering the vast numbers of young men who are living away from home in every large city, we can hardly tell how many of them do habitually neglect their religious duties.

THE EXPERIENCE OF THE WAR

During the War, the chaplains who served in training camps had an exceptional opportunity to judge of the religious conditions of our Catholic young men. Some of them reported that the graduates of parish schools were remarkable for their fidelity. But a sad proportion of the young men who had never had the advantages of a thorough Catholic training, kept away from Mass and the Sacraments, and even tried to conceal from the chaplain the fact that they ought to be Catholics. Many of these young men were the victims of their parents' neglect in the matter of religious training. One poor fellow came up to me after a mission I had given to the soldiers in one large cantonment, and said: "Father, I am a Catholic. How can I get baptized?" "A Catholic, and you have never been baptized!" I replied in natural surprise. "I don't

think I have," said he, "because just before I left home for the camp my sister Mary said to me: 'Bill, when you get to camp, you better get some priest to baptize you, because I don't think you ever were baptized before.' "

A Knights of Columbus secretary related to me a similar incident. A young fellow came to the camp and was attracted to the K. of C. building. After coming there several times, he approached the secretary and said to him in a confidential undertone: "Say, buddy, when a fellow used to be a Catholic when he was a kid and hasn't worked at it for quite some time, how can he break into the Church again?" It was a practical difficulty for him. He wanted to be a Catholic again, but didn't know just how to "break in." He had to be told how to go to Confession, and what to do to resume his religious practice.

YOUNG MEN AWAY FROM HOME

The draft also brought out the extraordinary number of young men who lived away from home. In one city of about a million inhabitants, we were told that there were fifty thousand more young men in town than the average of the population would lead one to expect. Many of these young men were working in the great factories, and they had come from all parts of the country to get bettter wages and for the amusements of a big city. It is likely that twenty-five per cent of them were Catholics. During the War, of course, a tremendous impetus was given to work for young men. When peace came, the interest lamentably lessened. Yet, these young

men are as precious a belonging of the Church in times of peace as in days of war.

A great deal is said of the perils of country girls who come into large cities, and what is said is no doubt less than the truth. But who adequately realizes the perils which await a young man when he comes a stranger into a large city? Not long ago a Catholic mother wrote to me after having read an account of the conferences in Cincinnati on Welfare Work for Young Men, and expressed her own solicitude. I shall reproduce the letter verbatim, suppressing, of course, names and places. It is a human document of great significance to the city pastor of souls.

DEAR FATHER:

Reading in to-day's *Sunday Visitor* of your efforts in behalf of Catholic centers for young men, I could not refrain from writing you.

I am a Catholic mother, and, though this is a work for the Catholic men, I must voice my words of hope for the success of your plan.

I live in the country, and it is we country folk who see the cruelty of the cities. I can name dozens of good young men who have gone from our parish to ———, and who went from indifference to actual loss of faith. You in the cities don't quite realize how hard it is sometimes for a country person to get to Mass. We are used to our little home churches, where we know our pastor intimately, where we are surrounded by friends.

Your big, grand churches seem vast and strange, even cold. We don't know the priests who come and go; we don't understand the ways; we don't feel at home. Is it any wonder, then, that young men, good young Catholic men, fall away and get in with bad company, and so gradually stay away from Mass altogether? Such a center as you propose would mean so much. It would throw the right sort of influence around our boys who go to the city to work until they learn the ways of the city, "get

their bearings," so to speak, and then a less number would lose the Faith.

I wish there were some way I could help. Two of my own brothers left home practical Catholics; one now is almost an agnostic and the other a fallen-away Catholic. My own son must go next year to finish high school. Will it mean a loss of his most precious possession? My daughters are safe in Catholic convent schools; but oh, my boys! How I dread the future for them! How I dread the city!

Such a center or centers for our Catholic young men is a crying need, and I shall pray for its success.

Sincerely,

"A Country Mother."

EVEN FOR THE TOWN-BRED

Even for the town-bred boy, dangers to faith and to morals are all too frequent in our crowded cities. From the door of the school to the door of the office, store, or factory, is a terrific leap. Thrown into new environments, forced to associate with all manners of characters, brought into trying contact with many acute temptations, the boy, so protected at school, is left utterly to himself just at the age when passions awaken and the will is weak. It is extraordinary what efforts we make, what sacrifices we go to for the sake of our boys while at school, and how very little we do to ensure their perseverance afterwards. It is as though they were a most precious possession during their childhood, and cease to be of any account as soon as they leave school. Organization is necessary to keep hold of them and help them to persevere. It is a difficult task, this organization, but necessary in direct proportion to its difficulties.

THE DIFFICULTY OF ORGANIZING

The most experienced pastors have sometimes the most to say concerning the difficulties of organizing societies for Catholic boys and young men. They have tried and have failed, or they have made efforts and only partly succeeded. Sometimes they have built centers and club-houses in their parish, and the young men have either wrecked or abandoned them. At other times they have organized societies which lingered out a meager existence and expired of inanition. This is one of the most severe difficulties of the pastor's life, the abiding problem in many parishes.

Add to this that the young men who do respond to such efforts are very often precisely the ones who do not need special help or care. They belong already to the first group we have mentioned. It is the second and third groups that offer the greatest attractions for the true hunter of souls, but they are shy and difficult to reach in proportion to their need. This is a very grave consideration. It is true of this as of too many of our activities that we are in danger of merely converting the already converted and of saving the already saved. Our methods are at times too much directed toward those who are already safe in the fold and too little pointed toward the wandering sheep who stray.

What methods, then, are at hand for the busy pastor, whereby he may practically reach and attend to the needs of the young men of his flock? No one person's experience can supply the answer to this question. Conditions are most varied, and so too are the qualifications of individuals. A method

which would succeed admirably in one man's hands would be a complete failure in the case of another because of differences of temperament and character. Some points, however, will be useful for all. What we shall suggest is not the result of our own experience merely, but a composite picture of the experiences of many gathered in a study of this problem far and wide.

THE NEED OF PARISH SOCIETIES

First, it is clear that we need parish organizations for young men. The pastor who becomes disheartened at the difficulty, and gives up trying to have good societies for young men in his parish, commits a tactical error. In this respect emphatically, half a loaf is infinitely better than no bread. The mere effort to keep up a society of young men, especially if the aim is directed toward bringing in and making fervent members those who now belong to the second and third groups mentioned above, is a constant source of good. The very existence of such an effort is a good sign in a parish.

It is quite true that some pastors have the gift for getting and keeping their young men about them without any organization at all. Their energy, fervor, and ability to deal with young men effectively dispense them from any need of organization. But they are the great exception, and their work often dies with them or ceases when they go to another field of effort. Given their personal presence, the work continues; in their absence it goes out like a lamp when the oil is exhausted. Very often, too, they cannot tell anyone else how to do the work. It

seems very simple to them, but their methods are incommunicable.

For every one of these born apostles of young men there are at least a hundred priests who can utilize organization to get and keep a hold on their young folk. If they can acquire the right methods and give enough time and energy to organization, they can manage somehow to keep Catholic young men's societies growing and make them bear fruit. Without organization their case is hopeless. With the right sort of organization, they can hold their young men. The task is never easy. Organization simply makes it possible at the expenditure of a certain amount of time, effort, and energy in the right way and to the right degree.

THE CHOICE OF SOCIETIES

In the choice of a parish society for young men it is desirable to keep two ends in view. First, the fervent and serviceable young men of the parish should be organized in such a way as to make them effective to aid the pastor in bringing in the other two classes already referred to. Second, some organization should be provided for bringing in, not only the fervent, but every young man in the parish who bears the name of Catholic.

For the first purpose, that society of the Blessed Virgin which is affiliated to the Prima Primaria of the Roman College offers special advantages, providing only that its purpose and methods are well understood and put into practice. Unfortunately, the name "Sodality" by which it is known is ambiguous and misleading for many persons. It might be

better to call it, for young men, the Knights of Mary, or some similar name which would better express its purpose than does the word "Sodality," which is common to many different confraternities and associations.

These Knights of Mary should form a spiritual chivalry, the purpose of their association being to employ devotion to the Blessed Virgin as a means of fostering a special fervor of the interior life of that precise kind which will tend to overflow in good works. Once the pastor or his assistant has organized such a group of young men, and filled them with the spirit of active service in honor of the Mother of God, he will have at hand a body of picked and willing aids to help him get in touch with other young men and influence them for good. Sections of these Knights of Mary may form committees to carry on the work of the Holy Name Society, the Apostleship of Prayer, work for Catholic sociability, lecture courses, etc. The cardinal point should be to train real leaders who can be depended upon to take their share of the work and carry it on. This relieves the pastors of a very heavy load.

The Holy Name Society has proved itself an effective means to gather in all the men of the parish and keep them faithful to monthly Communion, besides influencing them to a better life. Where the Holy Name Society already exists, its more fervent members may also be taken into the Knights of Mary, and thus form a nucleus of active workers, continuing their interest in the Holy Name and urged to still greater efforts through devotion to the Blessed Mother. Thus, there is no conflict between the Holy Name and the Knights of Mary. The one takes in

all the men of the parish; the other receives those who wish to do special work and exercise special devotion to Mary. Each can assist the other. Where there is apparent conflict, it arises from a misunderstanding of either or both of these societies.

The great difficulty which will arise in the minds of some pastors against this suggestion, is the trouble of maintaining two societies. But let us emphasize here the very practical principle that the burden of carrying on both these organizations should be put, not on the pastor or director, but upon the officers. We sometimes get into the way of thinking that all parish activities have to be lifted up and carried on by main energy by the pastor himself. The people, too, following the lead of the priest, adopt the same notion. In such a case, of course, the burden of carrying on so many activities becomes unbearable.

THE TALENTS OF THE LAITY

Then, we should always keep in mind that in matters of organization our lay folk have as much and perhaps more talent and capacity than we ourselves have. In their family life, in their business, they are called on constantly to solve difficulties, to arrange details, to meet situations which are not very dissimilar from those of society organization. If they are given responsibility and credit for the material details of their societies, they will make a greater success than the pastor could hope to achieve in the face of his other heavy charges.

Why not give our young men, therefore, the opportunity to carry on their own societies, always,

of course, under the direction and with the inspiration received from the pastor? It is more difficult in the beginning to cultivate their initiative and get them to carry the burden themselves, but it is infinitely easier in the long run. At present many pastors unconsciously discourage lay initiative. Once, when organizing a body of men, I made the suggestion to the pastor to pick out the leaders, and put the burden on them. "In my parish," he said, "there are no leaders. A few men come around to the rectory regularly to attend to the work of the St. Vincent de Paul Society, etc., but they look to me for everything. It is always: 'What do you think, Father? What would you like, Father?' They seem not to have any mind of their own."

Afterwards, however, when there was question of choosing the officers, he remarked himself that "we must get some leaders"! "But, Father," said his assistant, "you were just remarking yesterday that there are no leaders in this parish." "I have since been thinking that over," said the pastor, "and I have come to the conclusion that there have not been any leaders, because I have never wanted any. The men do as they think I wish. They say 'What would you like, Father? What do you think, Father?' because that is what they think I want them to say. I will have to let them know that I really want them to take the lead."

THE INEVITABLE EFFORT

No one with any experience of the ways of parishes will imagine that such societies for young men can be kept up without serious effort and even diffi-

culty. The point is that they are worth all and more than they cost. Whatever honest effort is put into such organization brings its own return, which is usually directly proportionate to the work expended. It is never easy to design and build a capable machine for accomplishing some specific work, or to keep it in running order, clean and oiled and ready for use. The advantage of such a machine is not that it dispenses with work, but that a given amount of work expended on it brings far greater results than could be obtained by cruder means. Such a machine is a well-organized parish society as we have described it.

Another consideration which urges on the pastor the establishment and continuance of such societies is the means they offer for getting hold of the drifters and movers among our Catholic young men. In every city parish and in some country ones, there is a large element of Catholic young men who have come from other places. If they have been used at home to hold membership in a parish society for young men, they may look for one in the new parish. If they are merely nominal Catholics, they may be got hold of through the organized efforts of the Catholic young men and thus brought into Catholic association. But without organization, who can get hold of them?

THEIR DUE PROPORTION

Let us repeat that we are thoroughly aware of the very great difficulty of these activities for young men. Time is lacking on the part of the pastor. Yet, we may here invoke the rule of proportion.

The young men are surely not the least precious or needy part of the congregation. To them, therefore, ought to be given at least their share of the pastor's time. And, if the share of his energy which is due them be expended in organizing them and getting them to work, it will be much more effective than if directed merely to the help of individuals.

Again, young men move about so much, and are fickle at times in their choice of residence and occupation. This is all the more reason for getting hold of them in an organized way. A young man who has had no ties at home with his parish, will never think of joining a parish society in his new place of residence. But, if he has been a good member of the Sodality where he was brought up, he will be the more ready to join where he goes to live.

WHAT OF PARISH HALLS?

Much more could be said on this important topic, but I wish briefly to touch on another aspect of parish work for young men before I have reached the end of this chapter. Not a few pastors are much concerned with the problem of parish halls and centers for young folk. Is it well to establish such centers in parishes? Or do the many failures or merely partial successes of such halls indicate that it is better not to have them? One pastor who had worked long and successfully in his parish and had built a large and attractive center once put the matter in this wise: "I am almost sorry sometimes that I built this hall. The young people come here and learn to play billiards and pool and to bowl. Then they crave to try their skill against a larger

circle than the parish can offer them. So off they go to the downtown commercial pool rooms, billiard halls, and bowling alleys. Am I training young people to patronize downtown resorts? The same thing is true of their entertainment. They get tired of dancing with boys and girls whom they have known in the parish school. They want to get out into the great unknown where people will call them 'Miss' and 'Mister.' Your idea, Father, of civic centers for Catholic young people," he concluded, "would be a solution of this difficulty. Then our young people could go from parish halls to larger Catholic centers when they feel this craving for a wider circle of association."

INTERPAROCHIAL CENTERS

In fact, this remark seems to contain the germ of a solution for the very pressing problem of Catholic centers. It would be desirable to have in each large parish a well designed and well equipped and especially a well managed center for the social activities of the parish. In some instances this need might be met by a neighborhood center, at the intersection of two or three parishes and jointly managed for their mutual advantage. One knows that parochial feeling is sometimes—indeed, often—opposed to such a solution, but this unreasonable spirit is getting antiquated and belongs to a past condition of things. It is high time that we all realized that the interest of one parish is identical with that of its neighboring parishes. To get the young men back into the Church when they have wandered away, and to keep them there when they are in danger of wan-

dering, will be a benefit to every parish concerned. There are enough and to spare of young men to keep each parish busy with its own. If we take due care of our young folk, we shall have enough to go around.

CATHOLIC CIVIC CENTERS

But, in addition to these neighborhood centers, it is growing constantly clearer to thoughtful observers that modern conditions demand civic centers for Catholics, where the more general requirements of sociability, exercise, entertainment, and even instruction may be met. Hence, in large places it is for the interest of the parishes to coöperate in promoting these Catholic centers, which should by all means be made self-supporting and managed like a first-rate business enterprise under the direction of truly competent businessmen as managers.

With such a center it would be possible to get in touch with many young folk who are now drifting or aloof from all parish influences, and to refer them to their parish for neighborhood activities. Theoretically, of course, it would be much better to get young people back to their home and parish and keep them there. Practically, it is impossible to curb at once the restless spirit which drives young people away from home for amusement, companionship, exercise, and study. By giving them what they wish under safe auspices, we may get them to do what we wish in the matter of frequenting parish activities and of sometimes staying at home. But we must catch our hare before we can cook it.

With a right adjustment of activities, a system such as we have described would lift much of the

heavy burden of the problems of young men from the shoulders of the overworked pastor, while leaving him in such control as is proper of the young men's activities in his parish. To some it may seem that the methods we have outlined are utopian and impracticable. But the current is setting strongly in the direction of such coördinated activities, and, when once the waters have begun to run, we may be surprised at their strength and swiftness. We are now at the turning of the tide. Old methods of parish organization are proving inadequate to meet new needs. New conditions are making demands upon Catholics for activities in behalf of young folk which would have startled the Catholics of a former generation. We cannot turn back the hands of the clock. Every age has made different demands on the Church for ways and means of organization. The sooner we can react to these demands, the more of our Catholic young folk will be saved to the Church.

CHAPTER VIII

THE PARISH-PRIEST AND HIS YOUNG MEN

IN the last chapter we offered some suggestions concerning the activities of the parish-priest in behalf of the Catholic young men of his parish, and promised to give some account of successful experiments made in the direction of parish organization for young men and to point out some specific activities which they can take up. Despite the great difference in conditions in various sections of the country, it still remains true that the experience of one pastor is very useful in offering suggestions to others. No one can copy precisely the work of another, but slight modifications will sometimes make it possible to adapt what has succeeded in one parish to many. Let us then run over some of the successful experiments of parish-priests in organizing their young men.

A NOTABLE INSTANCE

The following history was related to me by a pastor in the Middle West, who at the time had one of the most efficient societies for young men which I ever encountered. I shall give the whole story, as it presents so many practical points for the encouragement no less than the guidance of pastors who are face to face with a young-man problem. When I was invited to visit this parish and to speak to the

Sodalities there, success had been achieved. But the preliminary effort and failure, as they were told to me, were even more instructive than the final success.

The pastor had come to this parish as a young priest some ten years before, to assume charge of a congregation cut off from another parish because of national differences. The people were very poor, and it was impossible to build a parish school. The young people were in a deplorable condition. They appeared frequently in the police court; they were poorly instructed in their religion, and were in great measure out of touch with religious influences. Long and deeply did the new pastor ponder how, under such adverse circumstances, he could shepherd these straying sheep.

AN OPTIMISTIC BEGINNING

In the enthusiasm of his inexperience he decided to begin at once a series of societies for all the young people of the congregation. Fired with a special zeal for catechetical instruction by the then recent letter of the late Holy Father Pius X upon the subject, he decided to make these associations a special means for such instruction. He announced at the Masses that all the young people of the parish were invited and urged to join the Sodality, and he divided the Sodalists into six brigades, one to take in the boys from eleven to fourteen, the other from fourteen to eighteen, the third from the age of eighteen until marriage. A corresponding series of brigades were organized for the girls of the parish.

As so often happens, everyone joined with a rush.

The young men numbered 180, the girls a corresponding number. The pastor announced that there would be weekly meetings, and plunged into the work of preparing his catechetical instructions, confident that he had solved at one stroke the problem of his young people.

THE USUAL DISAPPOINTMENT

Alas for his expectations! At the first meeting of the young men there was a good attendance; at the second meeting there was a notable falling-off; at the third or fourth only eleven young men remained out of all who had given in their names as members. As for the girls, surprising to relate, they were even less faithful than the young men. Younger and older, they abandoned the Sodality. The boys between the ages of eleven and fourteen remained faithful, and came regularly to their meetings. But of all the rest only eleven young men persevered.

The pastor was at his wits' end. What should he do? How should he offset this terrific defection? Should he give up in disgust a method which seemed doomed to failure from the outset? Fortunately, he was made of firmer stuff. He decided to fight the thing out along the lines he had first determined on.

Disregarding, therefore, all those who had fallen away, he devoted his whole attention for an entire year to the eleven young men who remained out of the large number of "joiners." He held weekly meetings at which he gave them carefully prepared catechetical instructions. When there was any event of importance in the parish he called on them

always for the prominent places. When the bishop came to confirm, it was they who were chosen, clad in white suits, to act as guard of honor in the sanctuary.

DEALING WITH DELINQUENTS

After a little while the young men of better instincts who had joined the Sodality and had been fickle in their attendance asked leave to come back again. With great seriousness the pastor assured them that they were formally expelled for non-attendance, and that it would be very hard indeed for them to get back their forfeited membership. The more he resisted, the more they insisted. At last, under very difficult requirements, a long probation, a three-fourths majority vote in secret ballot, conditions of perfect attendance in the future, etc., he consented to take them back, one by one. Once readmitted, they would have done anything to remain. Their fervor was in proportion to the difficulty of getting back and to the evident regard of the pastor for Sodality membership.

While the young men's Sodality was thus being rebuilt, there was no Sodality at all for the girls and young ladies. They had all fallen away, as we said, at the outset. The reëstablishment of this Sodality came about in an amusing way. One day, as he was walking along the street, the pastor overheard the shrill conversation of two little girls playing in a yard. They were mites of ten years or so, and as he passed one of them said to the other with a toss of her head: "Humm! There is that Father——. My mamma says he thinks that girls have no souls at all. There is no Sodality for them at our church!"

He said nothing to the little ones. But next Sunday at Mass their words formed the text of some pointed remarks of the pastor to his flock. He pointed out that it was not his fault that there were no Sodalities for girls in the parish. He had established them and the girls themselves had utterly deserted the banner of the Sodality. Upon them, not upon him, the responsibility must be placed.

THE YOUNG LADIES RETURN

That morning after Mass there was a hurried and animated conversation at the church door between some of the most alert of the young ladies of the congregation. Forthwith a committee of them waited on the pastor to beg him to give them one more chance. "Start the Sodality once more," they said, "and give us the opportunity to show that we are at least as good as the young men. If we fail this time, we will never ask you again." Naturally the appeal fell on willing ears. The three brigades of the Sodality for girls were reëstablished and with much enthusiasm. From that day on it would be hard to say which were the more faithful, the young men or the young ladies.

With his Sodalities thus reorganized and with the spirit of his young people thus stirred up to persevering attendance at meetings, the pastor began in earnest the work of catechetical instruction which he had proposed to himself from the start. At weekly meetings, ten months in the year, he delivered a series of carefully prepared talks, taking for his subject each year some definite series of topics

bearing on a phase of Catholic doctrine. One year, as I remember, he devoted his instructions at meetings to explaining the ceremonies of the Church. Another year he spoke on the primacy of Peter and the powers of the Holy See. After his instruction he made it a practice to ask questions to find out whether his hearers had grasped the points he meant to convey. Then he would call on them for a repetition of the Gospel and Epistle of the preceding Sunday—a very useful interrogation which resulted in intense attention to the reading of these at Sunday Mass.

At first the pastor used to arrange a summer camp for the Sodalists, and give them various recreations as an inducement to perfect attendance. But he told me he found these things unnecessary after a while. The Sodalists grew so accustomed to faithful and attentive presence that, as he put it, "I made them love the monotony of their meetings." I think it would have been truer to say that they loved the interesting instruction which was the chief feature of every gathering.

REMARKABLE RESULTS

When I arrived at the parish, these Sodalities had been in successful operation for seven years. During that time the average attendance at weekly meetings ten months of the year had been ninety-eight per cent. The results on the character of the young men and young women also were remarkable. No more scandals were heard of in the parish. There were many Catholic marriages. It was unknown to have a member of the Sodalities appear in the police

court. The careful weekly instruction had trained them in their religion, until they were able to take their part in any discussion that arose on religious topics.

My visit occurred during the War, and seventy of the young men of the Sodalities were serving their country, many of them abroad. They wrote frequently to the pastor, and the burden of their letters, he told me, was their gratitude for the sound training he had given them. "We are able to hold our own against anybody that attacks the Church and to answer any fellow's questions who wants to know more about Catholics. Thanks to you, Father, we know where we stand and what we ought to do."

Curious to relate, the pastor had never been able, so he said, to get the married women organized; but during my visit I persuaded him to make one more effort. It was successful, and the final outcome of his work was the presence in his parish of flourishing married men's and married women's Sodalities, which together with those of the young people counted some six hundred and fifty members, practically all of whom belonged to his none too large parish.

In commenting on his experience, the pastor remarked that it had been a great deal of labor to build up these Sodalities, but that once they were established his other difficulties and troubles took flight. He had no other serious cross in the parish except the mere effort necessary to keep his Sodalities fervent. They held the young men in close touch with Catholic influence, and fortified them against evil. The Sodalities were a hard work, but they made everything else easy.

THE SECRET OF SUCCESS

I attended the meetings with great interest to see what might be the secret of this extraordinary success. It lay largely in the pastor's personal interest and enthusiasm and in his immense appreciation of Sodality membership. At six meetings in the week (on three several evenings, two meetings to the evening) he was the first to arrive in the hall, fully ten minutes before anyone else appeared. As each Sodalist entered he paused at the doorway to catch the eye of the director and receive his salute. Only just so many chairs were ready as there were members to attend, and if anyone had sent in an excuse, the leader of his band of eight (they were all thus divided into bands) would remove his chair. Hence, the director could see at a glance if anyone were absent, by his vacant place.

In all the six meetings only one absence was noted, and the pastor made as much of it as though the member had died suddenly. He inquired what possible cause could have kept so and so away, and why he did not send an excuse. Afterwards he told me that three unexcused absences meant expulsion, and that he had only had occasion to expel one young man since the reorganization of the Sodality. He left town and went to live in another place, so keenly did he feel the penalty.

WHEN THE CRISIS COMES

We have given all these details because of their significant bearing on the success or failure of parish societies for young men. There almost always comes a crisis in the organization like the one we have de-

scribed. The first fervor wears off, and other interests claim the time assigned for meetings. One by one, the members are tempted to stay away. The Sodality has not yet become a fixed institution. The members have not formed any habit of regular attendance. It is then that the perseverance and enthusiasm of the director are put to a severe test. If he can carry on during this time of discouragement and by his fervor keep at least a group faithful in attendance, he can build up a permanent, habitual, and therefore reliable attendance, and through those who come to meetings can exercise a general influence.

The enthusiasm and appreciation of the director for the Sodality are contagious. In the parish of which we have just been speaking, the people were immensely impressed with the importance of the society, because they saw their pastor so fired with zeal in its behalf. Even outsiders caught a similar enthusiasm. "Do you know," said a business man of the place to me, "I can tell a boy who has been a member of that Sodality from the time he comes to work for me. It gives the boy a character of its own. I want those boys in my store." The attitude of the pastor was reflected not only in his own people but in the whole town in which his parish lies.

ENERGY AND PERSEVERANCE

It is sometimes said that certain priests have a natural gift for dealing with young men, and that others lack this faculty. The pastor in question disclaimed any natural magnetism or special attractiveness. He was not cut out, he said, to be a popular

man. Whatever he had accomplished had been done by holding to an ideal, using means which were proportioned to his problems, adapting his organization to the needs of his people. It was his conviction that any pastor who would apply the same energy and perseverance could obtain proportional results with his young people.

Let us turn now to another form of organization which is not so general in its application, but which meets a need widely felt among pastors. "What shall we do," they say, "to promote sociability among our young people in such a way as to keep them from dangerous associations and give them a chance of forming friendships with other Catholic young folk?" Where large and well-organized Sodalities exist, where the parish is well equipped with entertainment hall and rooms for social gatherings, the problem is not so great. But where such facilities do not exist, in the small parish or in newly established ones, what can the pastor do to bring his young people together for friendly sociability.

A SOCIAL EXPERIMENT

Not very long ago we were given the following history of the successful experiment of a city priest. He had been appointed assistant in a parish which was building up rapidly, and where there were as yet no facilities for meetings of a social kind. He noticed how many young people there were who seemed utter strangers to each other. They would come to Mass and even to Sodality meeting, but would hurry away afterwards without so much as a word to one another.

He proposed to some of his advisers an effort to organize some means of sociability. "Useless," said they, "the young people will never come." It was worth while making an effort, however, and so on the next Sunday he announced at all the Masses that those young people who wished more Catholic sociability were invited to attend a meeting at the rectory at three o'clock on Sunday afternoon.

Curiously enough, at the hour appointed, just twenty young men and twenty young women presented themselves, all of a good type of Catholic youth, and almost all utter strangers to each other. Meanwhile the priest had enlisted three of the mothers of the parish to serve as his aides in superintending the amusement. He told the young people of his plan to have meetings every two weeks at different homes in the parish in rotation, a number of families having agreed each to give an entertainment once in the year.

SIMPLE BUT EFFECTIVE

The program for the entertainments was simple and effective. The young people met at eight o'clock, and some played cards, and others chatted or amused themselves around the piano until a quarter after nine. During this time the priest would often drop in and chat with these younger members of his flock, thus getting to know them better and acquiring more influence with them. At a quarter after nine he departed, leaving the gathering in charge of the very capable matrons before mentioned.

Then the floor was cleared for dancing, and this went on under careful supervision until the stroke

of eleven, when everyone departed in great sentiments of friendliness. It was insisted that everyone leave precisely at the hour, and the families of the young folk knew precisely when to expect them home. There was little expense connected with the entertainment; a light refection of cake and ice cream was served before the dancing, and the few dollars' cost was met by voluntary contributions. Each family only gave its home for one meeting in the year, and it was found that the plan because of its very simplicity worked to perfection.

Such a method could be adapted to the small or the larger parish. Where there are only enough young people to form one such group, proceedings may be as above suggested. Where many such groups have to be formed, each can be treated as an independent unit and neighborhood parties can be held. Where, as so often happens, there are different social strata or where groups have to be organized along other lines of demarcation, this may readily be done. If a flourishing Sodality exists, a special section might be formed to systematize the groups. Often it will not be possible for the pastor himself or one of his assistants to look in, but if the matrons chosen to superintend the gatherings are competent and tactful—and every neighborhood should be able to supply its quota—they will be able themselves to carry on the work.

NEIGHBORHOOD GROUPS

This idea of neighborhood groups has a very wide application. In rural districts it is very valuable, as offering a solution of the great difficulties arising

from country distances and the badness of roads in some localities. If the whole rural parish be divided into districts and the work organized according to neighborhoods, it might be possible to have smaller groups of people meet together when large assemblies would be quite out of the question.

In the city parish at the present time the same idea is of decided value. At the great "Catholic Day," held in Munich soon after the War, we heard the Mayor of Cologne declare that the essential problem of city life is how to overcome the solitude which results from crowds. The speaker proposed as a solution the development of the neighborhood spirit. Man naturally is a sociable animal and craves some neighborliness. Even in the city, this instinct may be gratified by organizing neighborhood groups. It is sometimes said that large cities are really only a gathering of small towns, welded together. It is quite likely that some of the disadvantages of city life may be overcome by helping neighborhood groups to organize.

In every parish a little observation will disclose the existence of natural groups in neighborhoods. The people who live on certain blocks are within certain limits likely to have some special interests in common. City life is so miscellaneous that these natural affinities have little chance to assert themselves. By studying them and, with the assistance of his people, organizing neighborhood groups accordingly, the pastor may go far toward solving the very vital problem of sociability for our Catholic young folk. We do not minimize the great difficulties of this work for young people. We merely insist on its singular importance.

THE COMMITTEE PLAN

'Another principle of organization which should be of great service to our busy pastors is the method of forming sections or committees among the members of a Sodality for the accomplishing of special activities better suited to the energies of a group than to the united action of the whole body. In its essentials this plan is very simple, but it admits of indefinite modification. Indeed, it may be applied in almost any parish and in a very wide range of varying circumstances.

Briefly put, the method is as follows: just as a legislative assembly resolves itself into committees and gives to each one some department of activity, so the members of a Sodality may be divided into as many groups as there are desirable activities. Each group or committee (generally called a "section" in Sodalities) has its own officers—usually a president, secretary, and treasurer, if the latter officer is needed. Each section functions separately in so far as its special sphere of action is concerned, while always coöperating with and depending on the Sodality.

Young men are by nature extremely active. They like to see something doing, to get results, to take an active part in what is going on. By the organization of sections, every Sodalist may be given an opportunity of sharing in some actual enterprise of the Sodality. If he does not measure up to the opportunity, it is his own fault, and he has at least had his chance. Those who will not take to one sort of effort, may be attracted by another. Sections may come and go; works may change and be re-

newed. There is here indefinite opportunity for varying the activities of the Sodality, while preserving always the permanent form of organization. The Sodality supplies the element of permanent stability. The sections can introduce indefinitely numerous and pleasing variations.

SOCIAL ORGANIZATION

The most successful and appropriate sections for any given Sodality for young men must be discovered by the director and the officers, partly through discussion of the young men themselves and partly through experiment. In the book *Social Organization in Parishes,* which I wrote some years ago, to offer suggestions to pastors concerning this method of organization, I made many suggestions for sections which had been successful in this or that set of circumstances. Of course, it would be impossible to duplicate in one place all that had been done in another, but I considered that the experienced priest, out of the abundance of material offered, would be able to select such work as was presently useful for his young people, and could introduce from time to time new activities from among those so plentifully suggested.

THE THREE GROUPS

The sections of the normal Sodality group themselves under those for Sodality welfare, those which encourage practices of personal piety on the part of the Sodalists, those which aim at helping the neighbor, and those which seek to spread and defend the Faith. The director will do well to select at the start one or two activities which are congenial to the dis-

position of his members, and in which they can probably be interested. Only experience will determine in any given instance what is most attractive to a particular group of young people.

Some young men's Sodalities have taken quite enthusiastically to the work of Big Brothers, acting as volunteer probation officers in the Juvenile Court, looking after some particular wayward boy who is assigned to them, making friends with him, and helping him to better environment and to right living. Another activity which has proved successful in some instances is the formation of debating clubs and study circles, where the members actively conduct their own proceedings under the guidance of the director. At a time when so many attacks are being made on the Church and her principles and doctrines, young men might be stirred up to some desire to learn more of their Faith so as to defend it when occasion comes.

THE PARISH WELFARE SECTION

The section for parish welfare, described in the volume mentioned above, proved curiously popular with the young men in one parish where it has existed for years. The purpose of this section is to aid the pastor in keeping in touch with the whole parish more effectively than he could manage to do unaided. Especially in overcrowded neighborhoods where many of his parishioners live in rented houses and move frequently, where there is a constant stream of drifters and strangers coming in and out of the parish, where lodging houses and hotels, colonies of immigrants and of the very poor complicate the

work, it is almost impossible for the most zealous pastor to keep in touch with his people, even though he and his assistants visit constantly the different districts of the parish.

The parish we speak of was of this description, and the pastor had organized his men into a welfare section, dividing the parish into districts and appointing over each district a captain whose business it was to complete a census as soon as possible and to keep its record up to date by monthly visitation of his district. Each captain had as many aids as he needed. At first the whole work was given in charge of the married men's Sodality. But the young men at once protested and asked to take their share. So matters were finally arranged by taking six men from the married men's Sodality, six from the young men's Sodality, and six from the St. Vincent de Paul Society. The census was made most thoroughly, and revealed conditions which the pastor had never got in touch with—families which had left the Church, couples married outside the Church, young people who had never been baptized, and others who were out of all touch with religion. Some idea of conditions will be had from the fact that these men, helped by a Women's Auxiliary recruited from the married ladies' Sodality and young ladies' Sodality, found two hundred mothers of families who had given up the practice of their religion and brought them back to their duties.

THE YOUNG MEN WORKERS

The special aspect of the work to which we now call attention, however, is the active part taken by

the young men. Beginning with six representatives on the council of the welfare section, they steadily increased their representation and showed so much capacity for the work and interest in it that in a short time they were supplying nearly two-thirds of all the men workers, having distanced the older men by their interest and energy.

This example, which is drawn from actual experience (the welfare section in question has been in active operation for over ten years and is still carrying on its work), goes to show that young men can be interested in work for others to an unexpected degree, if only they are given an opportunity to exercise their zeal in the way they wish. Sometimes we make the mistake of not expecting enough from the young men and not giving them sufficient opportunity to show what they will do.

To conclude, we are at the beginning of a new era of lay organization. Any adequate remarks on such a subject as this must be part retrospect, part anticipation. Obviously the methods now in use in many parishes are, on the testimony of the pastors themselves, inadequate to hold and interest the young men. It must be our business, then, to develop ways and means of interesting the rising generation, of enlisting them in work for their own welfare and that of others, of counteracting the decidedly dangerous influences to which they are necessarily subject under present conditions.

THE POPE'S ENCOURAGEMENT

If these suggestions and brief accounts of the experience of other priests in working for their young

men will have the effect of encouraging some wearied and disheartened pastors, of inducing them to continue their efforts for young men and of pointing out to them some practical avenues of effort, it will have been well worth while to write these pages. Any work done for young people and for young men in particular must have a special blessing from heaven. We recall in this connection the solemn and impressive words with which the late Holy Father, Benedict XV, concluded a private audience in which we had told him something of the work for Catholic young people in the United States. After listening intently and asking pointed questions, the Holy Father rose to give a final blessing. He first declared that he blessed all whom we had in mind, all helpers and associates, all good works. Then he continued with much feeling: "But especially I bless the work for the Catholic young people. Continue to work for them. The Catholic young people are the hope of the Church; they are the seed from which the Church must spring. They are," and here he paused a moment before concluding solemnly, "they are indeed the Church itself of the future."

CHAPTER IX

THE OUGHT-TO-BE'S AND THE FALLEN-AWAYS

A DIFFERENCE OF OPINION

IT is a singular fact, and in itself it points a moral, that even among well-informed and experienced pastors of souls in this country there is a distinct difference of opinion as to the number of persons who are lost to the Church and to Catholic practice year by year or during any definite term of years. The two extremes of opinion are in very sharp contrast.

On the one hand, we find some observers declaring that the losses of the Church are appalling. They say that the young people who leave their country homes or their small-town parishes for the cities fall away in droves from the practice of their Catholic religion. They point to the comparative fewness of young men at Sunday Mass and their still more pronounced absence from evening services. They relate ominous instances of young people who have been found by chance, during a mission or at some special gathering of Catholics, and who have calmly confessed that since their coming to town they have hardly entered a Catholic church.

At the other extreme we find more optimistic observers who stoutly deny that there is any considerable loss to the Church, at least among those who

have ever really been Catholics. They say that most young people, even though they do stray away for a time from the Church of their fathers, soon come back again, and that it is very rare to find any large number of persons in a parish who ought to be Catholics and are not. They discount the instances alleged to the contrary, declaring that they are the great exception and not the rule. According to the latter, we are holding our young people quite competently and have nothing for which to reproach ourselves, since the occasional defections are only unavoidable accidents, which might happen under almost any circumstances.

The truth is usually found in the golden mean, and so in this instance it is quite probable that a thorough and comprehensive survey would reveal the fact that neither of these extreme views is quite correct. True, the more experience one has with actual conditions and the more one reflects on the probabilities of the case, the more it becomes clear that the gloomier view may be nearer to the truth. But things are not quite so bad, one would hope, as they are sometimes painted. That they are not so good as the extremely optimistic would have us believe, is, unfortunately, even more certain.

WE DO NOT KNOW

The significant thing, however, is, as we intimated in the beginning, that we do not actually know what is happening to our young people. Conditions vary in different cities and in different parishes even in the same city. But it is disquieting to think that neither in the individual parish nor in the whole city

can one find any definite statistics or even, often, any very authoritative estimate as to how many or how few fallen-away or ought-to-be Catholics there may be within the parish or the city limits.

This in itself is surely an occasion for regret. It means that the existing methods for keeping in touch with our people leave something to be desired. Quite naturally, of course, it is much more difficult to keep in touch with Catholics nowadays than it was in a simpler age. People move about like elusive phantoms, not dwelling in any one fixed spot in the parish for generations, as was the case, say, fifty years ago, in the older centers of population.

When people live in apartments or rented houses, race about in automobiles, haunt moving-picture houses, and roam the streets of an evening, it is quite difficult to keep track of them. When they skip from city to city or from neighborhood to neighborhood, it becomes bewildering to try to maintain a parish census at a high degree of accuracy. If it is hard to keep track of the good Catholics, who want to be kept track of, it is even more difficult to come in contact with the less fervent brethren, who have no desire whatever to be found and catalogued as Catholics.

The very existence of this dubious question as to the fewness or the greater number of fallen-aways and ought-to-be's is itself a challenge to everyone who has the interest of souls at heart. The shepherds of the flock, following their Divine Master, will have a tenderer heart for the strayed sheep that has wandered from the fold than for the ninety-nine kept safe and sheltered under the shepherd's care. If the good shepherd left the ninety and nine to go and seek the sheep that was lost, did He not mean to give

us a touching warning to be solicitous for the strayed and the lost of our day? Indeed, few things are more pitiful than a man or woman, whether young or old, who has possessed or who should be in possession of the unspeakable treasure of the Faith, and who has abandoned or been disinherited of that supreme blessing.

CONVERSIONS AND PERVERSIONS

We all should have a laudable and, so to say, natural instinct for making converts. We feel a certain consolation and joy at being the means of bringing the Faith even to one soul who has not previously enjoyed it. There is something touching and appealing about the working of God's grace in the soul of a convert. The individual who is converted to Catholicism experiences a singular and sometimes surprising joy and satisfaction in coming into the household of God with its rich abundance as contrasted with the meager poverty of spiritual things outside. This joy is often contagious, and it makes even those who have been Catholics since their infancy appreciate more fully the plenty of the House of God.

But, if a conversion is a joyful event, a perversion or a simple loss of faith is correspondingly calamitous, sorrowful, and wretched. Faith is such a world-renewing, earth-transforming, heaven-compelling gift that its presence or absence makes all the difference between day and night, between life and death. To gain the faith is to be born again. To lose it is to die a spiritual death, of which the corruption and dissolution of our corporal frame is only a shadow and an emblem.

The more vivid our own faith is and the more sincerely we treasure the gift of faith, the more we shall mourn over and deplore the loss of faith on the part of another. Hence, taking matters at their best and making every allowance for error in the calculations of those who declare that there are great annual losses to the Church, enough saddening certainty remains of defections among adult Catholics and of losses among the children who should be Catholics, to make any thoughtful man very sad at heart.

Add to this that the loss of faith on the part of any individual is not a personal calamity alone, but is likely to result in the spiritual misfortune of an indefinitely large number of others. The Faith is, to a great extent, preserved in families and descends from generation to generation through home training and early influence. When a Catholic young man or young woman falls away from the Church, or when some one who should be a Catholic never really enters into their Catholic inheritance, this often means that not only the individual but generation after generation will grow up without the least knowledge or love of the Church.

THE NUMBER OF THE FALLEN-AWAYS

How often it has happened in the history of our country that whole families have in this way been lost to the Church, God alone can tell. There are in this country, let us say, ten thousand parishes and missions. In nearly every one of them, despite the difficulty of gathering statistics, the pastors will tell you of instance after instance of families which are known to be of Catholic stock, but who have

fallen away from the Faith. Were there but one for each parish, this would mean ten thousand families deprived for indefinitely long, perhaps for ever, of the treasure of the Faith. Had the young people who founded the families in this country been well instructed and kept safe in the practice of their religion, not only they, but their remote descendants also, might have continued in great part to be Catholics.

Not very long ago, while traveling through a rather new region of the country, the writer was conversing with a Catholic physician of large practice, and the conversation somehow turned on this question of the number of ought-to-be's and fallen-aways. "They are very numerous in this city," he said thoughtfully. "I have a large practice and visit a great many homes, and it quite often happens, when I notice a Catholic picture or a First Communion certificate on the wall, that I say to the people of the household: 'You are Catholics, aren't you?' In an extraordinarily large number of cases, they answer: 'No, we are not. We don't go to any church, nor practice any religion.' 'Then, why,' I ask, 'do you keep that Catholic First Communion certificate on your wall or that diploma of the League of the Sacred Heart?' 'Because,' the father or mother of the household will answer, 'I was a Catholic when I was younger and I keep that as a souvenir. But when I came to this place, I married a non-Catholic and drifted away from the Catholic Church; so now we are not anything in particular.' If I come across so many instances of that sort of thing in my own practice as a doctor," he concluded, "how many more there must be in this whole city

who have fallen away in that fashion from the Catholic Church!" How many, indeed! We are left to conjecture. But such examples make us uneasy, to say the least.

FROM CATHOLIC NATIONS

There are some nationalities which possess in a special way the Catholic inheritance. The very sound of the family names carries with it something of a suggestion that these people are or should be Catholics. Ill-instructed, perhaps, antagonistic even in individual instances to the Catholic Church they may be, but all their historic antecedents and their national traditions are Catholic, and we usually say of them that they are either Catholic or nothing. How large a proportion of these traditionally Catholic people who come to the United States and of their numerous descendants, who seem destined to play a larger part in our national life, have either actually fallen away from the Faith, or else are in immediate danger of so doing unless very energetic means are taken to keep them and fortify them in Catholic practice? This again is a disquieting inquiry.

There are some pastors who answer this question by saying that little or nothing effective can be done for these people, that they do not respond to the efforts made in their behalf. But how are we to explain the persistent activities of proselytizing organizations which constantly multiply in numbers and which invest much energy and money in drawing the children and the young folk of these nationalities especially to non-Catholic denominations? It

is certainly much easier to make them good Catholics than to de-Catholicize them altogether. They have a certain inborn attachment to the Church. It is part of their national tradition. Yet, the non-Catholic denominations can hardly be accused of so great a lack of common sense as to continue to spend so much money and energy without any adequate return.

A GREAT MISSION FIELD AT HOME

If, on the other hand, we Catholics console ourselves with the remark that, though much could be done for these children, we have neither the means nor the energy to devote to them, we fall into a somewhat illogical position. We of the United States are now raising very large sums of money and sending an ever-increasing number of missionaries to foreign lands, and this is as it should be. Surely, such missionary zeal will draw down a special blessing of God upon us, for He is never outdone in generosity. But who will say that a missionary can do more effective work in a pagan country, all things considered, than among the swarming populations of a city slum where almost every one ought to be Catholic and where the children in particular are sometimes little better off, so far as religious instruction goes, than if they lived in some missionary country? To these children we have a very definite obligation. Whatever may be the faults of their families, the children themselves are a most precious inheritance of the Church. While helping those missions afar, we should not forget these mission fields at home, and we should keep trying, it would seem, with indomitable persistency, using one means after an-

other until we solve the problem of getting all these children under Catholic influence and giving them at least a fair chance for Catholic instruction.

NEW EFFORTS DEMANDED

Such problems as this call evidently for new forms of organization. The Catholic Instruction Leagues and various other forms of the catechetical apostolate are pointing the way. But their activities must be greatly multiplied before they meet the need adequately. Besides, it is not only the apostolate of Catholic instruction that these children want. They require also the apostolate of recreational supervision. Some of the older generation can hardly bring themselves to see that the enormous changes in society, and the still more striking advances which have been made in social study, have positively established the need of recreational supervision for poor children and for all children who have to live deprived, in great measure, of the good influences of a thoroughly adequate home.

By recreational supervision, the leisure time of the child—the time of the greatest danger and also of the greatest opportunity for character development and character training—is utilized to a high degree. The child is safeguarded both physically and morally, and through the influence of a sympathetic older person its play becomes more interesting, its natural instincts of gregariousness, playfulness, imitation and hero-worship are utilized and directed to a very interesting and satisfactory extent. A great deal of such recreational work is done at the public expense and by paid and trained ex-

perts. It is very much to be wished that Catholic young men and young women should be encouraged to enter this field, where the rewards are rather great and the opportunities for service still greater.

A FIELD OF BLESSED SERVICE

We need also, it seems, volunteer workers as well as paid and trained experts supported by Catholic organizations, who will not only give the children recreational supervision, but will bring a strong element of religious influence to bear on them, thus combining character training and religious instruction in a most desirable way. Here we may find a true vocation for some of those good and pious Catholic girls who for one reason or another have not been able or willing to enter the convent, but who have a real desire for service—an aspiration after some unselfish and highly useful form of effort for God and their neighbor. Not a few of them seek only a living and the chance for service. Some have already had special training in social work, or they might readily take sufficient instruction to make them competent recreational directors and teachers of Catechism. A course in health and hygiene would also be desirable, and then Catholic societies or parishes or groups of Catholic people organized for the purpose might raise a budget sufficient to insure them support, with some provision for their later years, so that they might live together in groups and go out to do recreational and catechetical work among poor and neglected children. Think how much good such a group of qualified and well-trained women, prudently directed and giving their whole

time to the welfare of the children of the slums, could accomplish. They would be the means of keeping in the Church multitudes of children who now are doomed in all human likelihood to grow up careless and ill-instructed and to contribute thousands more to the sad and difficult ranks of the fallen-aways and the ought-to-be's.

THE CAUSES OF LOSSES TO THE CHURCH

When we come to try to formulate the causes of losses to the Church, they readily group themselves under certain general heads. First, perhaps, in importance comes ignorance, a lack of instruction in the Faith, a want of early training, so that children who were baptized Catholics have never really learned what their Faith means, and are easily weaned away from it or simply leave off all practice of a religion which they never really understood. This ignorance may come from various causes. Extremes meet in the country child, so remote from Catholic influence and teaching as never to be taught its Faith, and the child of the city slums, living in the midst of such a congested population that it is as neglected as its country cousin. Sometimes it is the indifference and culpable neglect of parents which deprive the child of its birthright. Sometimes the parents' death or chronic illness throws the child in the hands of those who deliberately deprive it of its Faith. In one way or another a pitifully large number of children are thus lost to the Church. One must fear that the majority of them never come back again, but live and die orphaned from Catholic faith and practice, and bequeath no loyalty or interest in

the Church to their children and their children's children.

Truly, the time to remedy this woeful lack of instruction is during the teachable and impressionable stage of the child's life. Later on, when mature age has been reached, it may be more difficult to reclaim these neglected children than to convert some one who has never before been brought in contact with the Church.

ANIMOSITY FROM RESENTMENT

Another cause of the falling away of individuals from the Church is their pique or displeasure with some person whom they consider officially to represent the Catholic Church. At times, it is some animosity they conceive against the parish-priest or more rarely against the Sister in the school, which they take as a pretext for abandoning Catholic practice. Such instances may seem rare in the individual parish, but, if all the cases which occur throughout the country were summed up, they would form, one thinks, a not inconsiderable number.

The grievances of these people are sometimes quite unreasonable, and they are often not very desirable members of the parish. Yet, the fact that they do exist will naturally tend to make every one of us very cautious about giving offense in the sacred ministry, and about avoiding anything which would be even a plausible reason for complaint on the part of the more sensitive among the congregation. *Noblesse oblige,* and the very fact that the priest has so solemn an office and so tremendous a power, and that men and women are obliged to seek his minis-

trations for the most vital interests of their souls and lives, will naturally make him more careful than other professional men about alienating his clientèle or making anyone unwilling to employ his ministrations.

MORE IGNORANCE THAN MALICE

There are of course, besides, a certain number of persons who ought to be Catholics, but who practically sever their connection with the Church because they wish to lead a life that is free from moral restraint and inconsistent with any sincere profession of Catholicity. Unfortunately, there is a great difference between knowing and believing, and practicing and fulfilling. Some of these unfortunate persons, while they fall away from Catholic practice, still retain their faith in the teaching of the Church. Others again, perhaps in consequence of their evildoing, lose that precious gift and refuse the ministrations of the priest even on their deathbeds. Yet, the number of these is not nearly so great as that of those who fall away through ignorance and lack of proper instruction. Indeed, it is a common remark that once a child has been thoroughly taught its religion, the Catholic Faith takes hold of its mind and heart with such a strength that on the deathbed it is easy to revive the still smouldering embers of belief.

There are also a certain number of Catholics—and this is a consideration worth while dwelling on—who are actually perverted from the Catholic Faith and take up other forms of belief. One may think that their number is relatively small; yet,

they are a class to be taken account of because of the systematic and insistent efforts at proselytizing which are being carried on among poorer Catholics by certain misguided denominations. We have heard from time to time—and, no doubt, every priest has a similar experience—of people that should be Catholics, who have become Christian Scientists or Spiritists. It is rather more rare to learn of any Catholic joining one of the older Protestant denominations. Their diluted Christianity would hardly appeal to one who had any knowledge of the Church. But the fads and foibles in religion, the vague promises of the Christian Scientists concerning health and well-being, or the prospects of communion with the departed held out by the Spiritists, have a certain attraction for one type of poorly-instructed Catholic. Here also, however, it is to be noticed that ignorance is largely at the root of these defections, as it is also a contributing cause to the apostacy of those who leave the Faith because of their evil lives. One may say of the one as of the other that perhaps, if they had had better early training, more complete instruction in their Faith, they would have been fortified to resist the influences which led them away.

CATHOLICS WHO GO WRONG

There is still another aspect of this matter which closely concerns the interests of the Church and should give the heart of the priest some serious concern. This is the statement so often made of the large and even disproportionate number of Catholics who seem to go into paths of lawlessness and who

become sooner or later inmates of institutions or prisoners of the state or the nation. Many mitigating circumstances have been alleged to explain this constant assertion, and there exists in regard to it the same dispute that we have noted in regard to the number of the fallen-aways and ought-to-be's. Here again, the very fact that such a doubt exists is disquieting. The wider one's observation travels and the more one's experience grows, the more one is prone to fear that a far greater number of Catholic young folk fall into evil ways than should be expected, considering the immense strength which our Faith gives against temptation and the great incentive it offers to avoid sin.

Investigation shows that these unfortunates come from the very class of children who receive least effective instruction and training in their Faith. Such studies as have been made point to the fact that, though a large proportion of Catholics have been found in penal institutions, they are for the most part those who never went to a parish school, or at least did not complete their training there, or whose home life was such as to nullify, in great part, the instruction they received. In any case, ignorance and want of training are seen to be at the root of their misfortune also. It is singular and impressive how all signs seem to point to the need of more and more thorough and effective training for the Catholic child.

In view of these reflections, which culminate in the conviction that a better and better Catholic training, a more and more thorough teaching of all our people, is one of the most emphatic needs of our time, it would be interesting to make a comprehen-

sive survey of the precise means we are using to that end and to compare existing facilities and methods with possible achievements. Nothing human is quite perfect, and so one should expect to find that, great as our efforts are and important as our successes, we might still make great improvements in our methods both of training the young and of continuing and completing the instruction of those of maturer age.

The very fact that there seem to be such large masses of the population who ought to be Catholics, or who have been so at one time or another and who have practically ceased to be members of the Church, is a call for study and action of unmistakable insistence.

THE NEED OF LAY APOSTLES

Clearly, with the change of the times, it is not to the Sisters and the priests alone that we must look to accomplish the sum-total of Catholic instruction needed by our people. Speaking generally, it seems true to say that priests and Sisters are doing pretty nearly all they can in this line, and that to put more of a burden on them personally would be impracticable, not to say unwise. Of course, some of the Sisters who are now doing other work could be employed instead in Catechetical instruction of neglected children. This merits careful consideration. But where both priests and Sisters can perhaps do much more than at present, is in encouraging competent lay folk and helping them to organize in such an effective way that they will be able to carry their share of the work of Catholic teaching.

We speak often of the lay apostolate, and rightly so, because it is becoming of more and more importance. The absolute achievement of Catholic lay folk in the way of apostolic effort was certainly seldom higher amongst us than it is to-day. Considering the circumstances in which we find ourselves, however, and the acute needs of the time, and then summing up all the lay effort amongst us, one is driven to the conviction that what has already been accomplished in regard to organizing the laity and setting them into action, is only a small part of what is possible and needful if we are to meet the necessities of the Church even in this particular matter of thorough instruction of Catholics.

LAY CATECHISTS AT HOME

It is curious to remark that on the foreign missions the place of lay catechists and their work in the Church is far more defined and developed than with us. There the lay catechist is the right hand of the missionary. It is he or she who makes it possible to instruct and baptize tens of thousands, where the unaided labors of the priest would reach only hundreds. There is no reason why the same principle may not be applied in dealing with the needs of our under-advantaged and ill-instructed Catholics. If the trained and paid catechists in India or in China can go into a village, dwell there, gather the children for frequent instructions, prepare them for baptism and First Communion, and bring them to a point of knowledge of their Faith where the priest needs only to put on the finishing touches, why

cannot similarly devoted lay folk go into the crowded neighborhoods of great cities, assemble the Catholic children, teach them their Faith, and do everything that lay folk can do to save the rising generation for the Faith? Is it not a consummation devoutly to be wished?

CHAPTER X

THE PRIEST AND THE UNDER-ADVANTAGED CATHOLIC CHILD

THE heart of the true priest, like the Heart of Christ, is ever most solicitous for the welfare of children. The little ones of the flock, who have not yet lost their charming innocence, appeal to him with particular insistence. Witness the efforts made to establish and carry on parish schools for our Catholic children. How many a priest has planned and toiled in the face of almost insurmountable obstacles to secure a school for his parish!

Yet, fifty or sixty years ago, there was not so general a realization of the need of parish schools as there is to-day. When the movement to establish them was young, there were many even among the clergy who did not quite realize the urgency of the need. It required discussions and insistence to bring home to all that Catholic children can be instructed and trained most effectively in a Catholic school and that our schools may be managed successfully even in competition with those conducted by the State.

A PRESSING NEED

In a similar way it will need discussion and insistence to bring before us all in an adequate way the needs of those other Catholic children to whom

the word "under-advantaged" has been applied to indicate their relative lack of training and good environment. In the midst of parish work and cares, surrounded by immediate problems, the parish-priest may often lose sight of the host of Catholic children to whom his ministrations never come, who are outside the sheltering walls of his parish school, and who, for one reason or another, are in danger of growing up without adequate instruction and of being lost permanently to the Church to which they belong by national tradition and family inheritance.

There is no one who has the care of souls but must be interested in the discussion of the work which is needed for under-advantaged Catholic children. For these little ones are, in a sense, the most needy element of our Catholic population. They are, besides, unaware of their need and depend entirely on our charity and zeal to aid them. Moreover, they mature so rapidly and pass so soon from our sphere of possible influence. Now they are pliable and ready for good influences. In a few years, when the world, the flesh and the devil have had their way with them, these same children will have slipped away from our ken, and only with great difficulty shall we be able to come into contact with them at all.

PREVENTIVE CHARITY

It is curious and sad as well, how little even priests sometimes realize the need and the blessedness of preventive charity. Charity is holy and meritorious indeed when it tries to rescue those who are already fallen, to bring them back to the Church, and somehow to save their souls at the end. But it is still

more blessed—endlessly more, if we go by the golden rule—when it seeks to preserve the unfallen, to save the innocent from going astray, to watch over the children at all costs and with whatever expenditure of effort and time and money, so as to keep them from harm, to teach them right ways of living, to fortify them and instruct them in their Catholic Faith.

It is so that we should wish to have been treated if God had cast our lot in places where we should have been exposed to temptations and deprived of right instruction in our Faith. Suppose that we had been one of the many thousands of Catholic children in this country who are without any opportunity of systematic catechetical teaching, who live in congested tenements, surrounded by evil. Should we have wished, supposing that we could have realized our own position, to be left alone through our impressionable childhood, suffered to go down to the depths and dregs of sin and to drag others down with us, or else at least to drift away from all religious practice, and then to have charitable souls visit us in prison or try to influence us to come back to our Faith, when we had almost forgotten the name "Catholic"?

Or should we not have wished and prayed—supposing again that by some marvel we could have realized our condition—for some pitying soul to reach us before we had fallen or gone astray, to influence and teach us and save us from evil environment, and so to keep us from ever going wrong? Yet, there is not one of all the thousands of Catholic children who are now in the plight we have described, whose soul is not as dear to God as our soul,

or who has not as much reason to expect and desire the mercy of preventive charity as we should have, were we put in his perilous situation.

We have repeated several times a remark of one of the most experienced and observant of the members of our American Hierarchy. "Father," said he, "if we could only keep our Catholic children in the Faith, we should in a short time inherit this country." Truly, a striking observation and one which contains matter for much sad reflection. For the converse of this statement is likewise true. "If we do not inherit this country, it is because we are not keeping our Catholic children in the Faith."

THE RECENT IMMIGRATION

Everyone knows that the families of the recent Catholic immigration to the United States, coming from the southern part of Europe, multiply and increase with exceptional rapidity amongst us. The children of these large families, often brought up in the tenements of the slums, are precisely the ones who fall a prey either to the indifference or bad example around them or to the efforts of proselytizers. This makes the problem all the more keen and urgent. When Catholic children are relatively numerous, they are frequently the most exposed to grow up without adequate instructions. Again, the very children who have least religious teaching at home, are the ones who will more probably be sent to the public schools.

In one American parish which has come to notice, there is an immigrant population of nine or ten

thousand souls. The parents came from Southern Europe, and their children are for the most part quite young and swarm in the streets like ants or bees. In this one parish there stand some five public schools, filled in great part with Catholic children, or children who should be Catholics. From this one parish in one generation, it is scarcely an exaggeration to say, hundreds and thousands are lost to the Church who with adequate teaching could be added to the ranks of faithful Catholics. With them, Catholicity is a racial tradition. They will be Catholics or nothing. As matters stand, for lack of enterprise and organization among Catholics themselves, are we deciding that they shall be "nothing"?

Strangely enough, it is precisely where the need is greatest that less emphasis is sometimes laid and less interest shown. The crowded poor quarters of the great cities, the immigrant colonies where humanity swarms and children clutter the streets, offer the most fertile of all fields for our missionary effort. There the material is so abundant as to be overwhelming. There the zealous worker need not travel about to find opportunities, for all too many opportunities are thrust upon him. Moreover, these children have a title to instruction. They can claim the Faith as their inheritance. They are part of the treasure of the Church—that priceless treasure of the youth, whom the Sacred Heart of Christ holds so dear. They are the very ones of whom He said: "Suffer the little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not, for of such is the Kingdom of Heaven."

A MISSIONARY FIELD AT HOME

Yet, is it not literally true, strange though the statement sounds, that it would have been better for some of these children to have been born in a beehive hut in the African jungle, where a wandering missionary would find them and baptize them, and teach them the Faith? Then, they would have been well instructed in their religion. They would have been surrounded with a Christian atmosphere, when their village was converted to Catholicity. Here, in the midst of a Catholic population, they grow up and go forth without ever having learned adequately the meaning of the Catholic religion, without ever having come into personal contact with fervent Catholic teachers from whom they can learn the traditions and worship of the Church to which they were destined by race and place of birth.

We love and appreciate extremely the work of the foreign missions, and even by comparison we do not wish to take one iota from their support and popularity. This is the hour of God in the foreign missions, and a thousand million pagans wait for the Gospel, which never could be preached to them under more favorable circumstances or with greater readiness than now. But our people in this great and rich nation can and will do their full share in supporting the foreign missions. Indeed, a wave of enthusiasm has gone through the entire land for missionary work, and this is due, we have no doubt, to the agonized prayers of priests and Sisters and Brothers on the foreign missions, calling to God to raise them up helpers at home and especially in this powerful and affluent land.

OUR RESPONSIBILITY

It is high time now that we were realizing our duty at home to send missionaries to our neglected children and effectually to save them from the ignorance and evil which threaten to spoil their clean hearts and soil their white souls. While we do everything in our power to help the foreign missions—by prayer, by works, by gifts of money, and by the consecration of lives—let us not forget the missionary work which is crying to be done at our very doors. This is even more our responsibility than the other. These children at home are even more dependent on our care and mercy than are the children in pagan lands.

True, were we to neglect our duty to the foreign missions, their loss would be great and irreparable. Yet, the faithful of other countries would still send forth laborers into the harvest fields of Christ in Asia and Africa. But our mission fields at home—in the slums of great cities, where multitudes of children wait for the word of God and the teaching of good example—can be tilled by none others than ourselves. No priests from other lands will come in sufficient numbers, no Sisterhoods will think it their duty to send workers to the slums of our cities in sufficient throngs to meet the urgent need. These children are quite at our mercy. If we refuse to make the necessary efforts to instruct them, to train them, to gather them into Catechism classes and into clubs and centers so as to preserve them for the Faith, none others will take up the task.

NON-CATHOLIC ACTIVITIES

Work will indeed be done for them, but not unto edification. Non-Catholic agencies and societies will be multiplied to work among these neglected children and exercise an influence over them, even a religious influence. But it will be the influence of a false religion, and these workers will turn the children away from the Faith of their fathers. They will hasten the disintegrating process which is going on all too swiftly already, and will detach from Catholic loyalty children who, left to themselves, might have cleaved to the Church with traditional fidelity.

Besides, great as the problem is, the solution, at least in great part, is ready at our hands. Experience enough is now available to enable us to say with reasonable assurance what means will be adequate to meet the needs of these children and keep them in the Faith. Through a combination of methods, modified to suit the needs of different localities, we can bring instruction and training at least to the greater majority of under-advantaged Catholic girls and boys. It will be interesting and useful briefly to survey these methods.

MARSHALLING THE LAITY

Let us premise, however, that it is those having the care of souls who can best—one might almost say, who can alone—marshal the forces for this great endeavor. The laity are willing—far more willing and ready than we at times realize. In each of the activities which we intend to designate, we can find abundance of lay help, provided that the priests are definite and determined as to what they

wish the laity to do. This makes the subject of almost painful interest to the clergy. Of themselves, they can scarcely hope to reach and instruct all these needy children. But, through their influence and direction, they can marshal the laity to accomplish all that is needful.

What, then, are the means which have been found successful, and which only need to be multiplied to cover the whole field? First, and most immediately practicable, there is the organization of groups of lay catechists. With slight modifications and under various names, successful efforts have been made in many places to organize lay folk, both men and women, to do volunteer work in catechizing neglected children. Of these organizations, the Catholic Instruction League, with its headquarters in Chicago and with branches in a number of other cities, is perhaps the most widespread. Diocesan societies of lay catechists likewise exist, and some of them are very notably successful. Thus, to name only one among many, the Diocesan Confraternity of Christian Doctrine of the Diocese of Pittsburgh has many years of fruitful service to its credit, and not a few of the parishes of the diocese owe their origin to the labors of the lay catechists. These lay workers have gone into outlying settlements, gathered the children for instruction, come thus in contact with Catholic families, and made it possible to establish a parish where before there had not even been a Catechism class.

FINDING THE CATECHISTS

The most efficient catechists have often been found among the Catholic teachers in public schools. In

every city there are many of these who will offer themselves for the work. But, besides these trained teachers, a number of other Catholic young women and young men can be got to volunteer to give some hours of their time each week to catechetical instruction. Our parish societies abound in members who are able and would be willing to act as catechists, were they properly encouraged. The right organization of Sodalities should always include the formation of a catechetical section, and if, by unusual exception, the parish itself does not offer any field for their work, there will usually be neighboring parishes in great need of such activity.

On the missions in pagan lands, as every one knows, the services of the catechists are invaluable, and they supplement the labors of the missionaries, priests and Sisters, to an extraordinary degree. Why should not the same principle be applied to the solution of our home difficulties in catechizing neglected children? On the foreign missions it has been found worth while to establish regular schools for catechists, where men and women are trained to give systematic instruction. Why not have classes and courses in catechetical work for the laity? In what way could a priest or a Sister do more good than in training a whole group of lay catechists and sending them out to use their leisure time in teaching children the Faith?

LAY CATECHISTS

Not a few of our Catholic people have time to give to such work. Not a few would be much the better for some such form of unselfish activity.

There is a class of Catholic women of leisure, well-to-do, well-meaning, but sometimes inclined to be selfish and introspective. Were they to take up the work of catechizing, the children would do them as much good as they would do the children.

In this connection, the thought has frequently occurred to us of the need in the Church of a special group of consecrated women to devote themselves to the work of organizing and carrying on these catechetical activities in behalf of abandoned children. In various parts of the country, after lectures or retreats, zealous souls have come to inquire whether there is no way in which they could consecrate themselves to this work, and be supported while doing it. The idea has been discussed of forming groups of women who have sufficient devotion and self-sacrifice to dedicate themselves to the rescue of children and of encouraging them to adopt a common way of life and live at a center where they can have congenial companionship of evenings and a home-like spirit, and can go forth each morning to various centers to busy themselves in catechetical and rescue work for under-advantaged children. It is true that there already exist some such groups in several dioceses. Again, to name an instance, the Catechists of Our Lady of Victory are nobly volunteering for work in the Southwest. But a far greater development of the idea is necessary, adequately to meet our needs.

A SUGGESTED METHOD

At first, a simple rule of life would suffice. They could receive what was necessary for their support from some Catholic organization in the locality. A

fixed salary might even be given them as social workers, from which they could pay their living expenses and put something aside for the future. But, living together, they would not require as much by way of salary as ordinary workers, and some insurance plan might be adopted to provide them an annuity against old age. In the course of time it is quite likely that a more stable religious organization would result, and that they would adopt a definite and characteristic way of life. But at first it would be enough for them to act as catechists, consecrated to this as their life-work, and not only conducting catechetical centers themselves, but helping and organizing the work of the volunteer catechists who have been enlisted and trained in the ways we have indicated above.

There are not a few Catholic girls who have never had brought home to them a vocation to the religious life, or who have been unable in their earlier years to devote themselves in this way to God, but who in middle life experience a strong desire to consecrate themselves to some special work such as we have been describing. By becoming catechists they would gratify their own pious desires, and at the same time would be the means of saving thousands of children to the Faith.

NEEDED ACTIVITIES

Their work would not stop short with Catechism, but would include the recreational supervision of children, the conducting of Catholic centers and playgrounds, the carrying on of vacation schools, and all the needed activities for under-advantaged chil-

dren. The fact that a group of Catholic women in each large city was consecrated in the way described to such activities would be a powerful influence for the promotion of all such work among Catholics.

We do not forget the blessed endeavors of our Catholic Sisterhoods for under-advantaged children. In every city teaching Sisters who are already overburdened with the labors of the class-room, still find time and energy on holidays to go out to teach groups of Catholic pupils of public schools. Such activities are always blessed and fruitful. But the field is too vast to be covered in this manner, and the catechists of whom we have spoken would find many places still open for their endeavors.

There is a thought in this connection which may be worth dwelling on for a moment. At the present time, out of the more than four million Catholic children of school age in this country, not many more than two million are in the parish schools or could find accommodation there. Although most of our parish schools are crowded to the limit, yet nearly half of our Catholic children still remain outside their doors and attend public schools. How long a time it will be before we can build schools enough and obtain vocations enough for the teaching Sisterhoods to take care of all our children in Catholic schools!

OUT-OF-SCHOOL ACTIVITIES

In the meantime, would it not be profitable in some instances to employ the devoted and trained members of our teaching Sisterhoods in giving instruction to Catholic children outside of school hours

and in keeping them fervent in the Faith? Let me illustrate by an example. Some time ago I had occasion to visit a town of some ten thousand inhabitants, where, because of peculiarly favorable local circumstances, there is a magnificent public high school, which cost, we were told, some four million dollars, and contains the most extraordinary accommodations and facilities, both for study, exercise and play. So attractive were the advantages offered that ninety per cent of all the children in the town who were of high school age were in attendance. Among them, of course, was the same proportion of the Catholic child population. "What can I do," exclaimed the pastor, "to meet such a situation? I cannot begin to hope for the erection of so attractive a Catholic high school, and any effort I make in that direction will be dwarfed into insignificance by this palatial institution." "I wonder," said another priest, "whether it would not be advisable to obtain the services of Sisters who are competent to teach high school children, and then, instead of building a high school and trying to compete with the public one, build a parish center with study rooms and meeting rooms where the young people could be gathered together after school hours and on holidays and given courses in Catholic history and apologetics, in the Catechism of Perseverance and answers to current difficulties so as to fortify them and make them fervent Catholics for life?"

IN EXCEPTIONAL CASES

The suggestion is one which the thoughtful priest will turn over more than once in his mind before he

condemns it. Would it not be more practical under some circumstances to utilize the services of our teachers to rescue, so to say, and save a far greater number of Catholic children than they could care for in the class-room? The circumstances would, of course, have to be exceptional, as the ordinary means of instructing Catholic children will always be the Catholic school. Yet, this other plan deserves some thought as a solution for extreme conditions. Where in a city there are fifty thousand Catholic children in need of religious training, and only enough teaching Sisters are available to care for twenty-five thousand of them in parish schools, would it not be advisable to leave some of the Sisters free to instruct in their religion the ones who cannot be taken into parish schools? This question gains point when we reflect that the children who come to parish schools have usually much better home atmosphere and home training than those whose parents let them go to public schools.

CATHOLIC CENTERS AND SETTLEMENT HOUSES

The place of the Catholic center and settlement house in caring for under-advantaged Catholic children is coming to be more and more recognized. Indeed, the conditions of the times make such work almost imperative. Besides, the constant activities of non-Catholic associations, which work persistently with Catholic children, stir us up to supply for our own children the sort of service which they offer to under-advantaged children in general. Yet, in many places the work of providing adequate centers for the Catholic population is very much in its

infancy. The more emphasis we lay on the need and the quicker we succeed in supplying adequate facilities for our own children, the sooner we shall effectively prevent the proselytizing efforts of the sectarian settlements.

That these are succeeding only too well in accomplishing their ends, is painfully evident to the student of their activities. Some time since I was told that some seven boys from one of these settlements in a Catholic neighborhood—boys who had been born of Catholic families—had entered a Protestant seminary to study for the ministry. When I mentioned this to one of the priests of the locality, he sadly replied that he could match the instance with similar examples. These children had never learned anything about their Faith, and the friendliness and plausibility of the workers at the settlement gained their childish confidence and quite alienated them from the Church.

OUR SINGULAR ADVANTAGE

On the other hand, in this sort of work we have an extraordinary advantage over the non-Catholics, if only we will match their methods and energy. The Catholic children take naturally to Catholic workers. There is a bond of union already existing and a ground of sympathy already established. Some years ago, in one of our great cities, a Catholic girl of leisure but without great means learned of the proselytizing activities of a large and well-endowed non-Catholic settlement in the slums. She decided to devote herself for a time to the task of watching over the Catholic children and saving them

from proselytism. So, with her slender revenue, she rented two rather small rooms in the neighborhood of the settlement house, and invited the Catholic children to come to her for play and story-telling, instead of going to the non-Catholic institution where their faith would be in danger.

The children came in such numbers that the two rooms could scarcely contain them, and they deserted the settlement house until its manager cried for mercy. "Send at least some of the children back to us," he said. But the Catholic girl refused. Then, as a last resort, the settlement house manager offered a bribe to the children. "Come back to us," he said, "and we will give you two weeks at the seashore, if you promise to leave your Catholic friend and remain faithful to our settlement house." The children came to the Catholic girl, full of excitement, to ask what she would give them if they remained true to her. The poor girl was at her wit's end, for she had no money to provide any offset to two weeks at the seashore. So in desperation she said: "Stay with me and I will take you on a walk across the bridge." It was a free bridge, as the children knew full well, yet their natural devotion and affectionateness proved stronger than the allurements of the beach. They remained with her and the settlement was desolate.

THE GOOD WORK DONE

In all that I have said I do not forget or disparage in any way the immense good which is already being done by Catholics, or the splendid organizations which already exist in many places and are being

multiplied day by day. Many devoted lay folk are giving of their time generously, and many priests and Sisters are occupied with the welfare of neglected and under-advantaged Catholic children. Yet, the need is greater still than the efforts that are being made to meet it. We must multiply our endeavors and quickly, if we are to save to the Faith the rising generation of under-advantaged Catholic children.

CHAPTER XI

THE HOSPITAL AND APOSTOLIC EFFORT

EVEN very well-informed priests, unless they have made a special study of the matter, scarcely realize the importance of the hospital as a field for apostolic effort. Indeed, hospital workers themselves are sometimes hardly aware to the full of the significance and opportunities of their work from the standpoint of the saving of souls and the mending of broken lives. It will be interesting to say something on this important subject from the vantage-point of the priest, whose chief interest is the care of the soul, but who often has occasion to consider also the healing of the mind and even of the body as a step toward spiritual regeneration.

To begin with, any hospital whatsoever offers a field of special fertility to the apostolic worker. Men and women who are in good health and prosperous can often be brought to think of their soul's welfare only with difficulty, if at all. They are too much interested in their life as it is, too firmly in the grasp of habit, too deep in the web of circumstances, to be helped or even reached by the priest. If they are Catholic, they may be hard to find, scattered as they are in the midst of a non-Catholic population and not to be identified by any earmark. They may have ceased to go to Mass on Sundays, and have got out of all touch with Catholic activities.

A CONCENTRATED OPPORTUNITY

Let these same individuals fall ill and go to a hospital, and at once they become very much more susceptible of good influence, more accessible, and more easily recognized as Catholics. Before they entered the hospital, they were hidden in their own homes or at their place of business where the priest could not penetrate. Now they are quietly resting in a hospital room or ward, where the priest can pay them a friendly visit and make inquiries concerning their religious affiliations and their spiritual condition. They will welcome a visit of this kind, especially when suffering or weariness is upon them and they feel the need of companionship. Thus, the priest can reach them in the hospital with relative ease.

Besides, these patients in a hospital are in a far better frame of mind to welcome the advice and spiritual help of the priest. They are now no longer in the midst of earthly distractions and earthly attachments. A sudden change has come over their lives, and this change is of a character to make them thoughtful and susceptible. They have been brought face to face with the realities of the next world. Even though their illness is not serious, it is a messenger telling them of the shortness of this life and the nothingness of the world. They are suddenly made aware of what a slight hold they have on things as they are, and how soon they will have to be looking forward toward death and eternity.

IN A DIFFERENT LIGHT

Many a man and woman has seen the world in quite a different light from the quiet vantage-point of a hospital bed. Besides, the great change in their manner of life which comes to patients in the hospital tends to weaken for a time the strong grasp of habit, and to deliver the soul from the maze of distractions and occupations which prevent so many people nowadays from even thinking about religion or from taking any care to secure their salvation. It is not so much ill-will or malice that leads many persons to give up the practice of their religion as the indifference which creeps over them in consequence of worldly preoccupations.

The hospital is, in a certain sense, a place of refuge from the world and to an extent from the flesh and the devil. The seriousness of the atmosphere, the simplicity of life in a hospital, the languor, pain and suffering that attend disease, the sense of danger, the feeling of personal weakness and dependence on God which come to the sick, are all so many antidotes against worldliness and so many aids to the good influence of the priest.

THE SISTERS' HOSPITALS

This is true of all hospitals to a degree, but it is particularly true of the Catholic hospitals. Because they are in the care of Catholic Sisterhoods, because their atmosphere is Catholic and their influence on the patient spiritual, these are in a particular way a field for apostolic effort whose fertility and importance have always been appreciated, but are per-

haps not fully realized even now. Hospitals have always been favorite working-places for the Saints and holy souls. Throughout the Middle Ages, when it was chiefly the poor and abandoned or strangers who came to hospitals, one reads in the Lives of the Saints how they delighted to visit these places of suffering and misery, to care tenderly for the sick and to console them in spirit by their friendly and pious talk, while they relieved at the same time their bodily needs and sufferings.

The present writer not very long ago made a pilgrimage to Rome, during the course of which he visited some of the most famous of the ancient hospitals there—the Hospital *Della Consolazione,* the *Borgo Santo Spiritu,* and the rest. In these ancient buildings, hallowed by memories of the Saints, one finds huge wards with vaulted ceilings and great high windows, where more than a hundred patients lie side by side and are ministered to by the Sisters and the hospital orderlies. In such places, in ancient days as now, the priest went from bed to bed exercising both the spiritual and corporal works of mercy, instructing the ignorant, counseling the doubtful, administering the Sacraments, bringing back to the Fold the sheep who had strayed and confirming in their faith and piety those who were beginning to waver. Such hospitals were and are an endlessly rich field of apostolic labors.

THE MODERN HOSPITAL

Our Catholic hospitals in the United States minister not only to the poor and destitute but to every grade of society, and their work is therefore all the

more fruitful, their possible influence the greater, and the field they offer to the apostolic worker the more extraordinary and inspiring. To our Catholic hospitals come the well-to-do, the influential, those who have power to help or to hinder the good of souls, the non-Catholic as well as the Catholic, those who have grown weak in faith and careless in practice as well as the fervent and the good.

Thus, the population of the Catholic hospital at any given moment is like a cross-section of society itself, embracing all manner of men and women and offering them to the zeal of the apostolic worker in the best dispositions, under most favorable circumstances, and with the slight effort of merely going from room to room or from bed to bed.

THE MANY NON-CATHOLICS

The number of non-Catholics in particular who seek the help of Catholic hospitals is quite remarkable. Even in regions where bigotry is rampant, the bigots themselves often come or send their relatives to Catholic hospitals, because they realize that the surroundings and the service there will be best for their sick. Bigotry is often only a very pitiful form of ignorance, and the enlightening of these poor people concerning the real nature of the Catholic Church and the life of the Catholic Sisterhoods is in itself an apostolic work most fruitful and most pleasing in the eyes of the great Lover of souls. This enlightening is often accomplished merely through residence in the hospital and by dealing with the Sisters and experiencing their gentleness and kindness. But, when the soul has thus been pre-

pared for the good seed, the priest can often give helpful instructions or kindly suggestions which would have been received under no other conceivable circumstances.

VAST NUMBERS OF PATIENTS

The number of the patients who come every year to Catholic hospitals is so great that the mere statement of it is rather startling. So far as we can estimate from the data on hand, the sum-total of patients in our hospitals in the United States and Canada rises every year to the high-water mark of about three to four millions. In other words one out of every twenty-five of all the inhabitants of the United States comes to our hospitals every year as a patient, and remains for a period extending from a few days to several weeks or months. In this way the ever-changing population of a hospital is constantly recruited. What proportion of these patients are non-Catholics, or Catholics who have fallen away from the practice of their religion, we can only estimate for the present. But, even though only one out of every four came under this category, it would still mean that a million very needy souls were every year the inmates of the Sisters' hospitals. Add to this that the number of patients is constantly increasing, that nearly all the Catholic hospitals are either just building additions, or have recently finished them, or are planning an increase in their capacity to meet the growing demand, and one can see that the future promises to be still richer in opportunity than is the present.

THEIR RELATIVE IMPORTANCE

The relative importance of the Catholic hospitals is also very great. Dr. Martin, the Director General of the American College of Surgeons, stated at a meeting of the Catholic Hospital Association not long ago that sixty per cent of the private bed space in the United States and Canada was under the care of the Sisters. There are more than a hundred thousand beds in the Catholic hospitals, this would mean that a hundred thousand patients can be accommodated simultaneously. Supposing that one-third of these beds were vacant most of the time (which is far too high an estimate), we could still find that at any given moment seventy-five thousand patients were being cared for by the Sisters.

THEIR CONSTANT GROWTH

The total number of Catholic hospitals in the United States and Canada is something over seven hundred, and they are constantly growing both in numbers and in the size of the individual institutions. The development of medicine and surgery tends constantly to send more and more persons to the hospital. Discoveries of processes and treatments, of methods of diagnosis and cure, are likely to require delicate tests, accurate observation, and care of the sort which is practicable only in a hospital. Thus, for example, the discovery of insulin, the development of toxin-anti-toxins, the methods of diagnosis by laboratory analyses—all these have greatly increased and will still further augment the number of patients who visit the hospitals.

In the United States and Canada the growth of the Catholic hospitals has been quite extraordinary, and their potential field of influence is very impressive. Fifty years ago there were very few Catholic hospitals in the land, and the vast system of to-day is thus the outgrowth of only half a century. What another half-century will do for the Catholic hospitals, no one can tell, but we do know that their growth and favor with the public will depend in great measure on the manner in which they keep up with or, if possible, keep ahead of the times, not only in their material equipment and scientific efficiency, but in the spiritual and intellectual life which they foster. The Catholic Sisterhoods have the greatest opportunity in hospital work in the United States that we can see the whole world over. But, to realize this opportunity, they must develop consistently along the lines of higher education for hospital work and in preparation for the hospital apostolate, no less than in modern equipment and technical methods. It is the spirit of the Catholic hospitals more than their material excellence which has made them prosper.

The very buildings of some of our hospitals offer in themselves a silent evidence of their extraordinary growth. Twenty or thirty years ago the hospital began, perhaps in a private residence adapted for the purpose, perhaps in a small and simple building which met the needs of that time. One can still see this original building in the midst of a splendid hospital group, the structures of which have been added from time to time and offer a mute evidence of the successive steps by which they have risen to meet the new needs, until a splendid hospital has

grown out of the small beginnings of a few decades ago.

THE NEED OF RELIGIOUS AID

What with the demands of material equipment and the anxiety of management, it has been difficult to make the intellectual and spiritual activities of a hospital keep pace with its material development. Thus, the priest can often lend precious encouragement and aid to the devoted Sisters in maintaining a deep religious life and an intellectual atmosphere within these walls, devoted to the spiritual as well as the corporal works of mercy.

Hospitals in general and Catholic hospitals in particular have moreover grown from mere institutions for the care of the sick into a much more complex and important series of activities, actual and possible. The social work of hospitals in particular is assuming more and more importance. Their influence as educational institutions is being better and better realized year by year, and a corresponding group of opportunities and obligations have come to the Catholic hospitals to-day, which were unthought of in great part by those of yesterday.

THE SOCIAL SPHERE OF THE HOSPITAL

The importance of the hospital as a center for social work is being more and more realized and acted upon year by year. Hospital social workers form a special group of trained professional people. The social service department of the hospital is constantly developing, and its potentialities for spiritual as well as for material good make it of singular

interest to the priest. The hospital which wishes to keep up with the times must have a social service department in charge of trained workers, and the number of these increases with the number of patients, especially of those who are in social circumstances which call for special investigation and help.

The social importance of the hospital arises from much the same circumstances as make the hospital so fertile a field for apostolic work. The world and his wife and often his children come to the hospital, whether for diagnosis or treatment, for operations or observation. If four million men, women and children pass each year through the rooms and wards of our hospitals as patients, it is clear enough how vast a field of social work they must offer. Some of them are poor and their illness is a result of poverty. Unless we remedy their poverty, they will fall ill again and again, and will remain a burden on the public. But the social worker can often detect and remedy the cause of their destitution, once they have come in touch with them within the hospital.

DEVELOPING SOCIAL SERVICE

There are other patients who are well-to-do in material goods, but who suffer from evil habits or errors of one kind or other. These can often be ministered to and adjusted by means of social work. Some persons have wrong ways of living which react unfavorably on their physical condition; and, if these are not found out and remedied, they will be constantly coming back to the hospital and going from bad to worse. Ignorance of one kind or another is often the cause of illness. Illness again

causes poverty. Poverty causes in turn both ignorance and disease. Thus, individuals and families are often bound and broken on the wheel of adverse circumstances. But, when they come to the hospital, not only the physician but the social worker as well can come effectively in contact with them. This fact will make the hospital more and more an acknowledged center of trained social work. Hospital social service is still only in its infancy, but one can guess what it is to be in the future from the circumstance that the most needy, suffering and ill-adjusted members of society drift into the hospitals, and that the most progressive and eminent hospitals of today are constantly increasing and developing their social service department.

THE VALUE OF SOCIAL SERVICE

While social service has its defects and disadvantages, like all things human, no one should be unwise enough to look down on it for that reason. It is an organized and largely successful effort to cure social evils and adjust social wrongs, and it is making its way in spite of the intrinsic difficulties of its task. In few places does it find more occasions for the exercise of its activity than among the patients in a hospital. With a skilful and tactful social worker to put proper questions and keep records, which are strictly confidential and to be used only for the patient's benefit, it is possible to find out occasions for spiritual and material help in behalf of both the patients and their families, which could hardly be discovered in any other way. This social readjustment often has to do of course with mate-

rial circumstances, but the spiritual help and advice can also be secured for the patient by putting him or her in touch with a priest. Besides, it is a truism that the best approach to spiritual aid is sometimes through material assistance.

Emphasis should here be laid on the fact that the records of the social worker are confidential and intended only for the well-being of the patient. The inquiries that are made are, therefore, professional inquiries, and not mere curious prying into the affairs of others. If a social worker is properly trained and has the needful personality and tact, the patients are grateful for her interest and aid. Catholic women who enter this field of work find many precious opportunities for getting in touch with the under-advantaged and fallen-away Catholics and encouraging them to resume the practice of their religion or to be more faithful to its precepts, as the case may require.

THE EDUCATIONAL ASPECT OF HOSPITALS

The social service side of hospital work is every day developing more and more, and promises to assume in the future very great proportions. But from the intellectual and educational side the hospital is no less important, and this too will offer the priest many opportunities of exercising his apostolic zeal. As we have remarked, most general hospitals of importance have a school of nursing, where lay pupils and hospital Sisters are alike instructed in the elements of the nursing profession and secure a diploma as graduate nurses at the end of their course. These schools of nursing are professional schools,

and are being urged to higher and higher standards both by public opinion and positive legislation. The importance of this activity of the Sisterhoods in training so many members of the young profession of nursing deserves the interest and help of every zealous priest.

THE ENCOURAGEMENT OF GOOD READING

We all know that the possibilities of Catholic hospitals as a means of promoting good reading are only now being appreciated. Many patients have long hours of leisure when they are quite well enough to read or to listen to reading, and this is becoming increasingly true since the advances in medical diagnosis bring more and more people to the hospital who are not acutely ill, but come for diagnostic tests or preventive measures. These patients have the full use of their faculties and often crave for some occupation. If an abundance of good books is supplied to them, they can quite readily be induced to read what will be at the same time entertaining and profitable.

EVERY CLASS OF SOCIETY

Every class of society and every member of the family is to be found from time to time in our hospitals. Sometimes the mother, sometimes the father, and sometimes the children, young or old, are brought to the hospital for treatment or diagnosis or to spend some time there as patients. When this happens, the Sister and the priest can find precious opportunities of instructing them in their duties, giving them good suggestions about their family life,

and getting them interested in good books. In this way the hospital has a very great and real apostolate to exercise in behalf of the Catholic home.

Even if the priest finds himself unable to visit the sick personally and to instruct them in the way we have briefly described, he can quite frequently exercise this apostolate by proxy, by encouraging the nurses and the Sisters to take a special interest in the apostolic aspect of their work and to utilize the opportunities they so often have for influencing the sick for the better and for giving them needed instructions and advice. As the importance of the hospital apostolate becomes more and more realized, priests will find it more and more worth their while to make even great sacrifices in order to give instructions and encouragement to hospital workers. In this way, with comparatively small effort, they can reap a great harvest of souls, for who does not know that patients in the hospital are often ripe for conversion and singularly susceptible to holy influence and good advice?

A GREAT POINT OF CONTACT

There is another apostolic aspect of the hospital which deserves a word, even in this brief summary. Of all our Catholic institutions, the hospitals enjoy a singularly prominent place of relative importance. Recall that the most recent estimates, show that perhaps more than half of all the bed space in the country in private hospitals is in the hands of the Catholic Sisterhoods. Of the four million patients a year who are cared for in our hospitals, a very great number are non-Catholics. Now, our

Catholic schools are a source of great pride and joy to us, with their more than two million pupils, but there are some four million Catholic children of school age in the United States and hence only one-half of our Catholic children and about one-tenth of all the school children of the country are in our Catholic schools.

Our hospitals, on the contrary, not only take care of most of the Catholic patients, except some of the very poor who go to public institutions, but they also attract to themselves great numbers of non-Catholics, who come in utter ignorance of Catholic principles and practices, but who are sent by their physicians or attracted by the service which they know they will receive. After they have been for a while inmates of the Catholic hospital, they become interested in the Sisters and are impressed by what they see of the Catholic spirit. The priest who goes himself or who helps train and encourage the hospital workers to go into the rooms and wards with a pleasant and tactful message to these starved souls, is surely working in the spirit of Christ Who so dearly loved both to heal the sick in body and to forgive and console them in soul.

HOSPITAL PROBLEMS IN MORALS

There is one more aspect of the apostolate of hospitals which deserves a moment's comment. There are many special problems, cases in moral theology of a very important and sometimes difficult nature, which come up quite constantly in hospital practice. The Sisters and nurses, not to speak of the doctors and attendants, have a right to look to the priest to

give them guidance and to point out to them the Catholic key to the solution of such difficulties. For the giving of such solutions, the priest himself must have a definite and clear notion of the elements of hospital problems; and, while all priests may not be expected to acquire this information, there should at least be some prudent and well-informed members of the clergy in every city, to whom hospital workers may have recourse for counsel and guidance. Those who give retreats to nurses and hospital Sisters ought to be particularly well equipped in this regard, and the giving of such retreats is likewise a very important part of the hospital apostolate.

Space does not permit us to speak at length of the fruitful work of a hospital chaplain, or to do more than mention the very great importance of his task and the special qualifications he should possess. Nor can we more than mention the Catholic Hospital Association, with its official organ, *Hospital Progress.* The International Catholic Guild of Nurses which has for its purpose the upbuilding of the spiritual, intellectual, and social life of the nurses, and the promotion of the welfare of the Sisters' schools of nursing, is also deserving of the strong support of pastors of souls.

CHAPTER XII

THE PARISH-PRIEST AND MOVING-PICTURES

ALTHOUGH a great deal is said nowadays about the popularity of the movies and the extraordinary hold they have on the public, few of us realize the true magnitude of this new industry, or the profound effects that moving pictures have and are likely to have to an increasing degree on our own people and on the public in general. There is no instance in history of a popular amusement which has grown so rapidly or gained so deep a hold in such a brief time on the public taste as have the movies. Thirty years ago moving-pictures were an inconsiderable novelty relegated to peep-shows and penny arcades. No one dreamed that in one generation this new discovery would conquer the world and displace in public favor all other entertainments, besides creating for itself a new circle of patrons very much wider than that which any other amusement had ever been able to claim. Yet in about thirty years the moving-pictures have advanced from nothing to their present popularity.

THE MAGNITUDE OF THE MOVIES

In the United States alone, the business of the movies amounts to a gross total of $500,000,000 each

year. Fifty millions of our people attend the moving-picture theatres every week, and sit there for two hours or more at each visit. This means that a hundred million hours of their time is taken up watching the silver screen or enjoying the entertainments of singing, dancing and dramatics which in some theatres accompany the moving-pictures. Multiply this by the fifty-two weeks of the year, and we have fifty-two hundred million hours. Assuming that the average human life lasts about fifty years, and that there are some sixteen hours of waking time in each human day, this would mean that twenty thousand human lifetimes are spent each year at the movies. Now, our Catholic people form at least one-fifth of the patrons of these theatres. Thus each year our own people spend the equal of some four thousand lifetimes at the movies!

MADE IN THE U. S. A.

Then, too, the vast majority of moving-pictures exhibited throughout the world are made in the United States. Our producers can command such huge capital, and have displayed such extraordinary resources in staging, photographing and distributing the moving-pictures, that practically all the moving-pictures used in this country are made here; while at the same time eighty to ninety per cent of the moving-pictures exhibited in Europe are imported from the United States.

The product of the movies, far from showing any signs of decreasing, is growing day by day. Each year for several years in the United States, a hundred million dollars' worth of new moving-picture

theatres have been erected. These—some of them huge auditoriums—are packed with people night after night, while in some cases one may see long lines of patient waiters outside on the sidewalk awaiting their turn to be admitted to purchase a ticket for the show.

In 1926 seven hundred "feature" moving-pictures (that is, long and pretentious pictures for the screen of from five to twelve reels each) were manufactured in this country. In 1927, we are told, nine hundred of such features were released. Each of these feature films costs a usual minimum of fifty thousand dollars, while in some cases five hundred thousand or a million dollars are expended in the making of a single film. As soon as one of these feature films is completed, after all the complex procedures which are required to produce it, the manufacturers at once prepare one hundred and sixty positives. Of these, one hundred are circulated in the United States, while sixty go to various parts of the world to be exhibited for indefinite periods of time. The company which has produced this film has been assembled, trained and led through its paces by the director during the period of from two weeks to several months. It has repeated scenes for the film again and again. Many thousand more feet of film have been taken than are required. This is all worked over by the film editors, titled and made ready for exhibition, but the time consumed in preparing the film is as nothing compared to the extraordinary multiplication of its exhibitions.

THROUGHOUT THE EARTH

The one hundred and sixty copies of the film which ordinarily go out from the studio can be used day after day and night after night in one hundred and sixty different places, repeating the picture for as many audiences with unvarying and mechanical precision. While thousands of persons in New York are witnessing the successive presentations of the picture, at the same time an equal number in the great cities of the Pacific Coast may be entertained by the self-same performers through their mimic selves on the screen.

While the company which produced the first film is busily occupied in turning out, one after another, successive "features," the first "feature" is gradually making its way from the large cities to the smaller places and back again to second-class theatres in the large cities, then to the country towns and rural districts, while at the same time, far across the ocean, the identical picture is being shown with titles in every language under the sun.

The only medium for the communication of thought with which the movies can be compared in their capacity for multiplication and their universal intelligibility and appeal is the medium of print; and, though they are at a disadvantage as compared with print in some regards, in other respects they are actually superior to that marvelous means of communicating intelligence and thought.

AN UNIVERSAL ENTERTAINMENT

Many more persons seem to have a taste for the movies than may be truly said to have a taste for

reading. The audience of the moving-picture theatres is composed of every grade of humanity, from little children who can hardly spell out the titles, but who seem enthusiastically interested in the pictures, to cultured old folk who find a certain fascination in the magical screen. There is, of course, a small minority of individuals who profess themselves uninterested in the movies, but they are the vast exception, and even in their case it is questionable whether they would not become intensely interested were they to get into the habit of viewing the best of the films. The mere fact that the moving-pictures can bring graphically before us the most strange and distant lands, and show us the gestures and looks of wild and savage people, or the ceremonials of strange civilizations aloof from our own, makes them interesting to the thoughtful mind. At their best, they can also marvelously reproduce the most gorgeous scenes of ancient history, can make vanished epochs live again, and can visualize for us the dim, dead past with startling accuracy and detail.

THEIR OBVIOUS LIMITATIONS

Of course, the moving-pictures have decided limitations. They are no more than pictures that move, so that their whole field is confined to light, shadow and motion, to which, however, color and even speech are gradually being added. Even at the present time a fair proportion of the average film is taken up with titles or reading notices, which are prepared with care and skill in some instances and are quite often bits of literature. But, when one reflects that it is only a question of time when the voice will be

completely reproduced and synchronized with motion and when color as well as form will be thrown on the screen, he begins to realize that the movies will soon be able to reproduce the living person with all the characteristics of gesture, voice, and color. When this time comes, the moving-pictures will have excelled print, and will have achieved almost the power of the spoken word. It is true they will not for a long time attain that advantage of print, which consists in its permanence and convenience, so that a man may hold a book in his hand for long hours and ponder on a single page. The moving-pictures will never, therefore, replace books, but their potential power is closely comparable to that of the power of the printing-press.

INFLUENCE OF THE MOVIES

When we come to try to estimate for ourselves the effect of this new influence on society, the calculation has many aspects. It is, after all, a service in itself to amuse the people and to keep them harmlessly occupied during the leisure moments of the day, when they might be doing much worse things than looking at the pictures. We should give credit to the movies for their great power of entertainment and recreation. This is the main cause of their popularity. The people flock to moving-picture theatres, not to be instructed or to be edified, but to be amused. After a weary day in the office or store, they sink into a chair of a moving-picture theatre, and relax in the passive contemplation of the scenes which are flashed before them. If innocent, the movies do a real service in thus entertaining mankind.

Again, moving-pictures have no little influence in keeping families together in the evening. Where of old the father of the family would go out to the saloon, pool-room, or other meeting place, while his wife and children could stay at home and amuse themselves as best they might, it is quite common now for the whole family to set off for the movies together.

CONVEYING GOOD IDEALS

Besides, since the moving-pictures are a great means of conveying information, they may be effectively used in putting good ideals before the people, stirring up their sympathy for good causes, and making them aware of the sufferings and needs of others. We saw, during the War, how effectively moving-pictures were used for propaganda. It is quite likely, too, that moving-pictures have an influence in quickening the mind or at least in stimulating the power of observation. They are, of course, a passive entertainment in a sense, but the audiences have to be somewhat on the alert to catch the allusions, to interpret actions, and it is quite surprising how children acquire facility in following the story of a film. So far as the knowledge of natural history is concerned, of geography and ethnography, the movies help a great deal to familiarize the people with these things through their travel pictures, news reels and other educational features.

THE EXCELLENT TOO FEW

These achievements are to the credit of this most popular of all amusements. Of course, the potential influence of the movies for good is far greater than

its actual accomplishments. Some films indeed are very elevating, instructive and edifying. Numerically, however, they are the exception up to the present time. The producers in too many instances have appealed, not to the higher, but to the lower nature of the audiences. Though some of the great and beautiful films have had an immense commercial success, still, of the thousands of films so far turned upon the market, it would be safe to say that not one in ten has been elevating, beautiful, or in all ways worthy of the possibilities of this new medium.

We may be to some extent to blame for this condition in so far as we have failed to induce our people to patronize what is excellent and to protest against what is evil. The moving-picture producers and exhibitors are extremely anxious to know the taste of the public and the judgment of the multitudes concerning their product. They go to great trouble to find out what the people want, and the fact that Catholics for the most part remain entirely silent, and do nothing to express their approval of what is excellent and their condemnation of what is evil, seems to point to a distinct lack on our part which may become a grave fault. Like any business, the moving-picture producers who really control the industry are very keen to give the public what most of the public want.

THE VERDICT OF THE BOX OFFICE

The great test of public approval is the box office, which gives them the most substantial and unfailing evidence of what the people wish. As soon as a film is released and has enough distribution to bring re-

sults, the producers know at once how it has succeeded all over the country, and curiously enough a film that is a financial success in one district, we are told, is usually successful in other places. The fact that the people go in numbers to see a film, and pay money at the box office for the privilege, is incontrovertible evidence that the film is popular and appreciated. Beyond this the producers do not wish to go, as no other criticism of the film can compare for them with the actual financial returns. It is this which enables them to continue their business. If, after putting hundreds of thousands of dollars into a film, they receive still more hundreds of thousands back, they are satisfied with that film. If their money does not return to them, no amount of beneficent approval on the part of societies or individuals will console them for the financial loss, except in the case of certain films which large companies put out principally to win good-will for their product. We do not defend this attitude of the producers, but merely state it as a fact to emphasize the contention that in patronizing bad movies our people do the most they can to promote them. They should refuse to go to evil exhibitions, and thus most effectively discourage such exhibitions.

THE POWER OF PROTEST

Neither must we overlook the power of protest—especially of organized protest. The moving-picture industry is naturally very much opposed to censorship and very much afraid of it. A great part of their joint activities in the last ten years has been directed toward discouraging censorship, and it is

unquestionable that the efforts they have made to clean up the industry have been in large measure made from the desire to avoid censorship. They also naturally fear organized protest, because every protest is only another argument for censorship and also because no one likes to be accused of wrongdoing. A protest rightly made will tend to discourage the producers from making more of the moving-pictures in question. Of course, some injudicious and wrongly made protests have had exactly the opposite effect, and greatly increased the patronage of certain bad movies, without influencing the producers thereof.

AN AGENCY OF CONTACT

The organization of Motion-Picture Producers and Distributors has a special department for dealing with public protests, where suggestions and objections to films are gladly received and transmitted to the proper persons. This is often, if not always, better than to protest publicly against moving-pictures in the press or to make the protest generally known to the public, because that induces curious-minded people to patronize the film so as to see what is wrong with it. The effective protest is made to the manufacturers of the film, or to the exhibitors who will refer the protest to the manufacturers. This strikes the evil at its root. There is too little of this expression of honest opinion concerning the movies, made directly by Catholic individuals and societies to the producers or distributors of moving-pictures.

THE PRIEST'S ACTIVITY

It does not require much effort on the part of the priest, when he is made aware by his judicious and prudent parishioners that a certain picture is bad or vicious or objectionable from the standpoint of Catholic teaching, to have the secretaries of his parish societies send a dignified protest to the theatre where the film is being exhibited and to the Association of Motion Picture Producers and Distributors in New York, or to the producer or exhibitor of the particular film in question. This letter should set forth in a temperate and dignified way the objection which Catholics find to the film, and should end with the expression of the writer's conviction that this protest will be welcome to the producers and will help guide them in future work. We ought always to avoid anything intemperate or excessive in such protests, and should give the other party all the credit we can for good intentions.

OUR CATHOLIC DUTY

The fact is that we, as Catholics, know a great deal more about what is right and wrong than the rest of the world about us, and we have a certain duty to manifest our conviction on such subjects. Unless we do this frankly and honestly, how can we expect that the producers will respect our convictions? But, if a great number of the Catholic societies of the country would write frequently to express their convictions on the subject of the morality of the films, this would undoubtedly have a very good effect on raising the standard of this form of commercialized entertainment.

ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT

That there is a great deal of room for improvement, anyone can see by merely noticing the posters before the theatres and reading the press notices of the current attractions. The limitations of the movies are very definite. They have to hold the attention and interest of the audience.

To hold the popular interest, jaded by the viewing of many films, it is necessary that topics be chosen which are highly interesting, and that they be treated in a thrilling way. Now all this does not preclude the making of many innocent and often instructive and inspiring moving-pictures. But, as a matter of fact, it is easier to appeal to the baser instincts of mankind than to the loftier emotions. The latter requires art, skill and intense effort; the former needs only a knowledge of the springs of lower passion. For this reason, we find movies turning again and again to scenes of violence, to sex elements, to the eternal triangle, and the topics of dissipation and crime. These things can be easily visualized. They at once attract attention, hold the interest, and, therefore, lend themseles to the commercial purposes of the movies.

AN UNDOUBTED IMPROVEMENT

It is true that the theoretical ethics of the movies, so far as directing morals is concerned, are generally good. In other words, though they portray crime, they condemn the criminal; though they show scenes of passion, they usually indicate also the retribution which follows. But, especially in the case of young

people, it is no excuse for showing vicious scenes that one shows the punishment thereafter. The harm is done to the mind and feelings by the evil scenes portrayed, while the subsequent punishment is easily passed over and forgotten. There is no doubt that the moving-pictures are better than they were during the period of gross license which gave rise to so many efforts at censorship. They may be said in general to be better than current reading, in so far at least that the organization of the moving-picture producers and distributors have succeeded, according to their own accounts, in keeping at least one hundred bad books and plays from the screen which would have been very profitable if put into the movies.

THE SOURCES OF SCENARIOS

It is interesting to remark in this connection that nowadays most of the movies are made from plays and books. We are told that about fifty per cent are picturizations of plays and twenty-five per cent picturizations of books, while the remaining twenty-five per cent are conceived and planned in the scenario department of the producer's studio. There seems to be little opportunity for an amateur to prepare a successful scenario. The chief scenario writer of one large producing company informed us that his establishment had at one time maintained a whole staff of readers to look through the scenarios sent in quantities by the public and to search for valuable material. But after a long time spent in the reading of innumerable manuscripts not a single one had been found which was acceptable for production.

So the manuscript readers were dismissed and one office boy was employed whose sole business is to remail manuscripts to their senders as soon as they arrive at the office!

THE QUESTION OF CENSORSHIP

When we come to the question of censorship, a good deal of discretion is to be used in judging its influence on the movies. After discussing the matter with a number of Boards of Censorship throughout the country and with producers and distributors and exhibitors of moving-pictures, we have come to the conclusion that censorship has done a very distinct service in removing the coarser features from many moving-pictures before they are shown to the public and especially to children. Censorship is, of course, very limited in its possibilities in that it must deal with existing material, because the censors receive the films only after they have been made, titled and put in their final form, and after hundreds of thousands of dollars have in some cases been expended on them. Thus, the conscientious censor is put into a very difficult position. He is usually bound by very definite standards of censorship, and is obliged to eliminate anything which offends against them, but at the same time he is dealing with a very large public interest and has to respect the rights of the producers in their costly film.

Thus, even after he has cut out what is absolutely offensive, he often has to pass films for exhibition which are far from meeting his ideas of what a film should be. The most effective censorship would be

that which the producers themselves would exercise on their product. Often, too, the Boards of Censorship declare that, while they are attacked, criticized, ridiculed and blamed, they receive very little support or encouragement from the part of the community who are really in sympathy with their work.

PRUDENT PARISH ACTION

Just here the prudent influence of Catholic parishes would come in. Surely no pastor of souls can be indifferent to an influence so great for good or evil as the movies. Now, the Boards of Censorship, though they are only human and sometimes do things which are not very wise, are still for the most part well-meaning and succeed in their tasks beyond what could be expected. They do eliminate many scenes and topics which are unfit for the public gaze, and in doing this they give children—and adults who are only children in their mentality—a needed protection against evil. Thus, in the State of Pennsylvania, for example, there has been for more than a decade an effective consorship of the movies which controls the eighteen hundred theatres in that state. During this period the Board has made thousands of eliminations of scenes in the pictures where nakedness was displayed in a shameless manner, where sexual topics were treated in a way very apt to injure the innocence of the young, and where detailed scenes of crime were portrayed in such a way as to instruct the criminally disposed in the technical methods of window-opening, porch-climbing, safe-breaking, garroting, and various methods of robbery and murder!

THE PUBLIC SERVICE OF CENSORS

No one could doubt, it would seem, that the Board in removing these scenes from the exhibitions of the eighteen hundred theatres of the State of Pennsylvania for the period of ten years, has done a great public service. Some years ago there were published in the pages of *The Ecclesiastical Review* a list of eliminations taken almost at random from the published sheets of the Pennsylvania Board of Review. The mere perusal of these baldly stated eliminations will give any pastor an idea of the character of exhibitions from which the Board of Censorship has saved the public. The movies have since greatly improved in this regard. But the Boards of Censorship will always have employment until the producers themselves strictly supervise their own productions.

COÖPERATION WITH THE CENSORS

Now, since Catholics are an influential part of the population of all large cities, they can greatly help the Boards of Censorship; and since our standards of morality are higher and purer, as everyone knows, than of those of the world about us, we have a duty in this regard which we should never forget.

We have had occasion to discuss this topic of censorship with Boards of Review in Chicago and New York, in Kansas City, Baltimore and Philadelphia which act for the City of Chicago and the States of New York, Kansas, Maryland and Pennsylvania. Without exception, these Boards of Censorship would very much welcome the coöperation of Cath-

olics, and they sometimes complain that, while some elements of the population are strongly against them, and while the opponents of censorship give them much trouble, the better elements of the population remain aloof.

In this connection mention should be made of the work of the moving-picture department of the National Catholic Welfare Conference and to that the International Catholic Alumnae, where suggestions are made concerning good films and coöperation is given to the national agencies which are striving for the betterment of the screen. Bulletins are issued from time to time giving the titles of films which are especially approved for the patronage of our Catholic people, and while everyone may not agree with the individual recommendations, still this list will be a help to the pastor in guiding his people. Obviously, merely to caution the members of the flock against bad pictures is not enough, they need guidance as to what they should see and patronize. Pastors, by encouraging the patronage of a good film, would induce the whole industry to produce more pictures of the same kind. When a worthwhile picture fails, it is only another argument to the producers that the public do not wish that sort of film. Where one succeeds, it is a strong stimulus to the production of other films of the same type.

NEIGHBORHOOD ACTION

But the insistence of the national agencies and the action of the national Catholic societies in regard to moving-pictures by no means dispense the parish-priest and the local Catholics from doing their share

in encouraging good films and protesting against bad ones. Neighborhood theatres seek neighborhood patronage and are very sensitive to neighborhood criticism. The large moving-picture theatres cater to the large districts, but they are also interested to know the individual's or parish's criticism or approval. If all the parishes united in the patronage or boycotting of the theatre in question, there is no doubt but that they could have a powerful influence on the exhibitor. Besides, everyone is sensitive to criticism, and this is especially true of commercialized amusements which depend so greatly directly upon the public. But this criticism should, we repeat, never be printed in the press or made public in any way. It should be sent directly by personal interview or letter to the man who is responsible, to the director of the theatre in which this film is appearing. Let him know of the approval of the Catholics if it is an especially worthy film, as well as of their disapproval if it is a film that is injurious to public morals.

OUR PATRIOTIC DUTY

Finally we should not overlook our responsibility in the matter of the control of the movies to other countries than our own, since the United States produces, according to the records of the distributing agencies, a very great proportion of the moving-pictures of the world. Thus in Great Britain eighty per cent of the films shown are made in the United States; and while in 1913 thirty-two million lineal feet of film were exported from the United States to foreign nations, in 1923 two hundred million linear feet of American film went to the foreign trade.

These films carry with them impressions both good and bad of American life and customs. In some cities of Europe American-made clothes and articles of furniture are being clamored for because the people have seen them in the movies. "The motion pictures," says one reporter, "is not merely entertainment in its appeal. It is an actual reflection of industrial conditions, the use of machinery and the ways of commerce and trade. American factories and mines, American transportation, American cities, American clothes, American customs—everything that goes to make this country great are reflected accurately on screens around the world. The sun never sets on the American motion picture." Nevertheless, Mr. Will H. Hays recently declared: "Motion pictures, great as is their present, are nearly all in the future. The yesterdays are almost insignificant as compared with their all-powerful tomorrows."

INFLUENCING THE PEOPLE

Surely, no pastor of souls can remain unmoved in the face of such an influence. Moreover, while the public has the last word to say as to the success of the movies, it is no less influenced by them in its turn. "This influence of the public," says one authority, "in deciding what it wants on the screen cannot, of course, be overestimated, but there is always to be considered the influence of the screen on the public. It is part of the daily life of many people. It influences their dress, their habits of thought and conduct, brings them into intimate contact with other races and nations, and is the greatest force for

spreading civilization in the most graphic, direct fashion."

A worker in the Juvenile Courts of Chicago once told us that, curious to determine the influence of movies on children, he had investigated two hundred cases of juvenile delinquency where the children, on being asked why they commited the crime, had said they had seen it in the movies. He obtained the title of the offending movie and went to view it. He found in most of the cases that the crime committed by the children had been actually suggested by the moving-picture.

A CASE IN POINT

Lest anyone should doubt the power of protest, let us relate this instance, told by an important official in the distribution department of a great moving-picture company. "Some time ago," he said, "it was announced that our firm was going to undertake a picturization of a popular book. At once we received no less than two hundred letters and telegrams of protest from organizations and societies all over the United States. As a result of these protests we at once sent a scenario man and an attorney to the place where the picture was being produced to see what could be done about changing the character of the book. The objectionable features were all eliminated, and we then sent a protest to the publisher of the book asking him whether it would not be possible to get the author to correct the next edition of the book so as to conform to the eliminations made in the moving-picture film. On being properly approached the author consented to do this. "I do not know," the distributor continued, "whether the

new edition came out or whether the changes were actually made, but this was certainly agreed to by the publisher and the author."

In fine, the zealous parish-priest will find the problem of the movies one which he can ill afford to disregard. It is a problem that must be handled with judgment and discrimination, but which must be dealt with manfully, since it promises to assume a greater and greater importance as time goes on. The subject of moving-pictures in the parish as a means of offsetting the commercialized amusements and as a way of conveying instruction, information and healthful entertainment to the parishioners, is too large a question for discussion in this volume.

A HELPFUL ATTITUDE

In dealing with the producers we should be constructive and encourage those projects which they themselves have sponsored to improve the moral tone of their creations. It is an evidence of progress that many directors and scenario writers and even the business managements of the films show a sense of their responsibility to make their pictures wholesome as well as entertaining. The Motion Picture Producers and Distributors have, in consequence of critical but kindly Catholic contact, made arrangements by which previous criticisms are utilized in making new pictures.

If we Catholics fail to take advantage of this opportunity, the responsibility is partly ours, if the motion picture industry fails to accomplish the great service of which it is capable.

CHAPTER XIII

THE MOVEMENT FOR CLOSED RETREATS IN EUROPE

WE have many things to be proud of among the achievements of the Catholic Church in the United States, but our energy and promptness in supplying to our people the general benefit of closed retreats are not among them. Quite the contrary. Indeed, considering the number of our people, their generosity and fervor, and the immense benefits which they would receive from close retreats, we are far behind our brethren in Europe in the organization of closed retreats for laymen and in the building of houses for retreats.

THE EARLY BEGINNINGS

The history of these retreat houses in Europe goes far back into the seventeenth century. France was one of the first nations to multiply houses for retreats, and by the end of the seventeenth century a number of them existed. Paris, of course, Nantes, Dijon, Rouen, Vannes in Brittany, Nancy, and many of the other large cities of France had their retreat houses for men in the eighteenth century, and it was quite usual for a house of retreats for women to be built near by. Other countries took up the movement with similar energy. Munich and Prague

in Germany had their retreat houses, so did Rome, Milan, and other cities of Italy. Spain, Sicily, Poland, Mexico, even China, as well as Canada and Chile, had houses of retreat. Besides the Jesuits, who were especially active in the work, many other congregations and orders of religious promoted retreats with notable energy. Thus, the Franciscans, Dominicans, Benedictines, Redemptorists, Passionists, Carthusians, Cistercians, Lazarists, Eudists, Orations, Fathers of the Divine Word, Vincentians, Brothers of Mary, Brothers of the Christian Schools, and others gave retreats themselves, or promoted the work by their aid.

South America witnessed some wonderful developments of the retreat movement, especially in Argentine and Paraguay, where the apostolic soul, Marie-Antonia de-San-Jose-de-La-Paz, is credited with having supplied the opportunity of making closed retreats to nearly one hundred thousand of her fellow-citizens. In more modern times, nearly every nation in Europe has been seized with the zeal for closed retreats. Spain, Austria, Italy, Canada, England, Holland, Colombia, Chile, Australia, Madagascar, China, Ceylon, India, have all established houses for closed retreats.

TWO LEADING NATIONS

Holland and Germany, however, are specially distinguished for a recent development in closed retreats which is quite extraordinary in its organization and efficiency. Holland is noted for its singularly effective Catholic organizations. The country is so compact, and its two and a quarter million

Catholic inhabitants are so united in race, language and traditions, that it has been possible to effect among them an extraordinary unity. In Venlo a retreat house was opened in 1908, and during the following three years some ten more houses of retreats were inaugurated in Holland. At present there are thirteen retreat houses in this country, which are filled with retreatants nearly every week in the year. It is estimated that nearly 17,000 men and 15,000 women make a closed retreat in Holland each year, while up to the present time the total number of Dutch retreatants is about 300,000. All this has been done for a population of little more than 2,000,000, while we with our 20,000,000 Catholics have not even equaled the record of our Catholic brethren of Holland.

OBEDIENT TO THE HOLY SEE

The retreat movement in Germany offers a striking object-lesson from several points of view. To begin with, it was organized in direct obedience to the clarion call of the Holy Father, issued in 1922 in his Apostolic Constitution of July 25, in which he names St. Ignatius the Heavenly Patron of Retreats, and expresses his desire that the retreat houses be multiplied. Then, too, the German movement for retreats was begun at the dark hour when all the economic system trembled in the balance, and when the people, discouraged by the total collapse of the value of the mark, were almost in despair. Finally, this retreat movement has been built up along the lines of parish and diocesan organization, and its extraordinary success is no doubt due to all three of these

circumstances, but especially to the courage of the German bishops and priests, and their obedience to the wishes of the Holy Father. It is perhaps the method of organization which the bishops of Germany have adopted that is responsible, from the natural viewpoint, for the singular success of the work. They have appealed to the priests in the parishes to send their people to the houses of retreats, and have made the business of organizing the retreats and building retreat houses an affair of the diocese itself, instead of the business of private individuals.

THE WORD OF THE POPE

The summons of the Holy Father was clear, definite and inspiring. In his Apostolic Constitution, which is to be found in the *Acta Apostolicæ Sedis* (XIV, pp. 420–422) and which was issued on July 25, 1922, after naming St. Ignatius of Loyola the celestial patron of all retreats, the Father of Christendom declares that it is his firm persuasion that the evils of our times have their chief source in the fact that so few persons nowadays ever really enter into themselves and become acquainted with their own hearts. The Holy Father states that experience has shown very thoroughly that the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius have a singular efficacy for counteracting those precise ills to which human society is everywhere a prey. He goes on to say that in consideration of the splendid fruits which closed retreats bring forth, not only among priests and religious, but among all classes of the laity, and especially among workingmen, it is his earnest wish that these retreats shall be made available to more of

the faithful, and that retreat houses shall be built in greater numbers to which people may go for a month, or for eight days, or for a shorter time, to be grounded in the principles of a perfect Christian life.

In a subsequent document—an Apostolic Letter which he addressed to the General of the Society of Jesus—the Holy Father still more strongly emphasized his wishes that retreat houses should be established and retreats organized for larger and larger multitudes. He states that he wishes the Exercises of St. Ignatius to be used as widely as possible, not that other methods are to be undervalued, but because the Spiritual Exercises are so wisely planned and hang together so logically that they are able to renew the inner man and give God His rightful place in the soul.

THE SIN OF MODERN SOCIETY

The Pope goes on to say that the great sin of modern society is disregard of God's rights and impatience of authority and over-assertion of the rights of man. The Spiritual Exercises can remedy these evils, and the Holy Father declares that he wishes the retreat movement in the future to be a popular one, and desires that everyone without exception shall be given the opportunity to use this marvelous means of sanctification. It was these stirring and definite exhortations of the Sovereign Pontiff which set the bishops and priests of Germany working diligently to multiply retreat houses and retreats

Of course, the movement had already assumed considerable proportions in Germany. The first re-

treat houses there had been established in the early half of the last century, chiefly in Westphalia. When the Franco-Prussian War broke out, the Jesuits had already eleven centers of retreats in Germany situated at Aachen, Bonn, Gorheim, Cologne, Kreuzburg (near Cologne), Feldkirch, Friedrichburg (near Münster), Maria-Laach, Mainz, Münster, and Paderborn. When the Kulturkampf broke out in Germany and the Jesuits were expelled, Father Arnold Janssen, founder of the Society of the Divine Word, became an organizer and apostle of retreats. The exiled German Jesuits established a series of retreat houses in Southern Holland at Blijenbeck, s'Heerenberg, Wijnansrade, Valkenburg, and Exaten. Retreat houses for women were also established in various places. In Trier there were two established at the beginning of the present century, and at Steyl in Holland, in the Convent of the Sisters Servants of the Holy Ghost, 50,000 women made retreats between 1893 and 1914.

A society called the Ignatian League of Men, established to promote retreats among lay people, has been in existence since 1900. The Catholic Workingmen's Unions of Germany have taken up the promotion of workingmen's retreats with great zeal. Retreats are given systematically to the young men before they enter military service. This work had been begun in 1905, and by the year of the outbreak of the War there were eighty-one centers of retreats in Germany of which thirty-four were used exclusively for retreats. But it was in the autumn of 1922, as we have said, just at the time of the great economic catastrophe of Germany when the value

of the old mark had reached the vanishing point, that the great diocesan organization of retreats sprang up in obedience to the Pope's direction.

PIONEER GERMAN DIOCESES

The Archbishop of Freiburg appointed an organizer and director of the retreat movement in his archdiocese in 1922, and announced that the parish clergy were to be depended on to promote the regular attendance of their people at the retreats. The Diocese of Paderborn established a central secretariate to encourage retreats systematically, both in towns and country districts. To carry out the suggestions of the secretariate an organizing committee was set on foot: the diocese was divided into districts, each under a supervisor who was to see that every parish made a retreat once a year; the parish clergy were to be the soul of the movement, and they were to have a conference in every district.

The Bishop of Münster drew up plans for the regular recruiting of retreatants, not only through the press and the pulpit, but by house-to-house visits of the clergy, and provided a fund so that poor people might go and make retreats. Retreats for young people, just as they are graduated from school, are given in these retreat houses. Various classes of persons are induced to make retreats in groups. All classes of society are reached in this way; and, since the parishes are made the official units of retreat promotion, they are able to appeal to all the people within their boundaries.

THE GROWTH IN GERMANY

Father Sudbrack, S.J., has written extensively of the retreat movement in Germany, and his book has been summarized by Father John Coyne, S.J., in an article in *The Irish Ecclesiastical Record* for November, 1925, in which many of the above facts appear. Father Sudbrack states that by March, 1924, there were 183 places in Germany available for the holding of retreats. By May, 1924, 187 places were available, and of this number 59 were entirely devoted to the giving of retreats. The Diocese of Münster alone had 13 houses used exclusively for retreats and 12 other places where retreats were given.

One can form some idea of the number of retreats made in these houses from the fact that in two weeks of May, 1925, 123 retreats were given in 15 dioceses. When we compare this record with the number of closed retreats given to lay folk in this country, we are rather put to shame. Though the retreat movement in the United States has been in existence for several decades, we do not number as many retreat houses or retreats in the entire nation as single dioceses in Germany can show. Yet, the tremendous efficacy of the Spiritual Exercises should be just as fruitful for us as for the older nations of Europe; and, if they with their comparatively crippled resources can so multiply houses of retreats, what should we not be able to accomplish with the aid of our zealous laity? Our men and women take very kindly to lay retreats when they are given the opportunity of making them, and we have enough experience to be quite sure that the retreatants themselves

will prove the best apostles of the movement, if only we multiply the houses of retreats.

IN OTHER LANDS

We have emphasized the movement in Germany because statistics are at hand concerning its spread,, and because its development has been so extraordinary in recent years; but in other countries also the movement has gone on apace. In France, the middle of the seventeenth century saw the establishment of many retreat houses, as we have said. St. Vincent de Paul was an energetic promoter of retreats, not only for candidates for ordination, but also for the clergy, the nobles and the people. M. Olier, the founder of Saint-Sulpice, promoted retreats. In Italy, the holy Archbishop of Milan, St. Charles Borromeo, urged his oblates to promote retreats, and he built a house at Milan for that purpose. Spain, Italy, Poland, Austria, Switzerland, in a word most of the countries of Europe, have been energetic in promoting retreats; and, on our own continent, Canada and Mexico have emulated the example of Europe.

OUR OWN ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Our own achievements in this regard can scarcely be said to match our opportunity and our need. Staten Island, New York, with its house of retreats, has been a pioneer in the work, and has done excellent service for several decades. Philadelphia has its own retreat house at Malvern, under the Laymen's Week-End Retreat League. St. Louis, Missouri, has now the White House, where week-end re-

treats are conducted. Detroit, Michigan, recently had a building campaign for a house of retreat, and the Fathers at Techny, Illinois, have long been giving retreats for laymen there. The Passionist Fathers conduct four houses of retreat. The Franciscan Fathers of Chicago have a very beautiful house of retreat. The Jesuit fathers have a retreat house at Morristown, New Jersey, another retreat house for men located not far from New Orleans and near Santa Clara, California, there is another retreat house under their supervision. Among the retreat houses for women are the convents of the Cenacle at Brighton, Boston, at New York, Newport, Lake Ronkonkoma on Long Island, and Chicago, and the Convent of the Passionist Nuns at Carrick, Pennsylvania. This list though perhaps not complete, enumerates most of the existing houses exclusively dedicated to retreats.

Then, too, there are of course a number of schools, seminaries and other institutions where occasional retreats for the laity are held. But we must work diligently and make up for lost time in the building of houses for retreats, if we are to do anything like our duty in carrying out the wishes of the Holy Father and in providing an opportunity for all our people to make a closed retreat every year.

OUR FURTHER NEEDS

Every one of our large cities should have not only one, but several houses of retreat for the laity. Each diocese would surely do well to make this a part of its regular diocesan activities. We should have retreat congresses, where priests who are in-

terested in the retreat movement could come and learn the methods which have proved successful in other places. We should have a series of conferences and instructions, where those priests who wish to take up this fruitful work may be systematically instructed in the matter of giving retreats.

We have already dwelt on the immense advantages which come to the parish and the whole Church from closed retreats. The clarion call of the Holy Father's Apostolic Constitution rings in our ears. God has blessed our land abundantly with every requisite for a multiplication of lay retreats, and our splendid Catholic lay folk deserve this singular help for personal holiness and apostolic zeal. "God wills it! God wills it!" Let us have a crusade for American houses of retreat in all our dioceses.

CHAPTER XIV

ONE ASPECT OF MIXED MARRIAGES

THE subject of mixed marriages is of perennial importance under present-day conditions, and forms a constant occasion of anxiety to many parish-priests. The number of mixed marriages which occur every year in some of our American parishes is so great in proportion, that the situation appears to call for even more serious and practical attention than it is at present receiving. Nor does the number of mixed marriages seem to be decreasing. On the contrary, in some places they are actually becoming more numerous, and are said to form now one-third or even one-half of all the weddings recorded.

THE CHURCH'S ATTITUDE

It is needless to recall how the Church has set her face against these marriages, and how she discourages them by her legislation. Her attitude is the result of age-long experience, and it is surely justified by the observation of every priest. Only a few days ago we listened to the earnest pleading of a priest with his people, in which he besought them to use both their personal and organized influence to counteract the ill-effects of mixed marriages in the parish. He declared that one-third of all the families in his parish who attended church were the con-

sequence of mixed marriages. But he went on to lament the fact that there were a great many households of the parish where the mother or father had been a Catholic, but where neither the one nor the other, nor any of their children, attended Sunday Mass.

This experience is too common to be remarkable, but it surely points a very significant moral. What is the reason of all these mixed marriages? What conditions give rise to them, and how may we reasonably hope to find the means of abating this real evil by encouraging our young people to marry those of their own Faith, and thus avoid the very great danger and very real evils which follow mixed marriages?

Of course, no one wishes to deny that such marriages sometimes turn out happily, and that they result in a certain proportion of cases in the conversion of the non-Catholic party. But, though this may be true, it still remains a fact that the bad results far outweigh the good, and for every individual who is brought into the Church through a mixed marriage, how many mothers, fathers or children have been lost to the Catholic communion through these same marriages, where husband and wife differ in their religious belief and where they often weakly solve the problem of their mutual disagreements about religion by giving up religious works altogether and letting their children grow up without any religious training!

THE REASONS FOR MIXED MARRIAGES

When we come to try to analyze the reasons for mixed marriages, we find them quite easy to ex-

plain. In our country, Catholics and non-Catholics are brought into constant contact with one another, and both in business and in social life have many chances of meeting and forming friendships. In fact, we all know that it is far easier in many cases for a Catholic young man or woman to get into a mixed company of Catholics and Protestants than it is for the same individual to become acquainted with really excellent Catholic young people and to keep in a social atmosphere which is genuinely Catholic.

It seems too obvious and trite a truth even to require mention, but really we appear often to forget that in order to make a Catholic marriage the young man or woman really must be able to meet the right sort of Catholic young people. Indeed, the very strong inducements offered by non-Catholic companionship make it necessary to give our young people special inducements to keep Catholic company. They are very human, and we must deal with them as human beings who are quite likely to follow the line of least resistance, and whose conduct, though it depends on their own free will, can be calculated with fair certainty along the lines of moral probabilities.

Thus, as long as we leave our young people—as they too often are now—open to the influence of non-Catholic associations and often without adequate means of meeting Catholic young people who are congenial and eligible, even though they much wish to do so, we can count on having an annual crop of mixed marriages which, instead of decreasing, will very likely go on increasing year by year. For there is no shutting our eyes to the fact that modern life,

especially in a big city, is becoming more and more inimical both to the Catholic spirit of the home and to the establishment of true Catholic families. Unless priests, especially those who are in parishes, take definite and energetic means to counteract the existing condition, there is little question that the mixed marriages will go merrily on, despite the strong attitude of the Church and the pious wish of the clergy.

TWO EFFECTIVE REMEDIES

The two effective means to lower the number of mixed marriages and encourage Catholic ideals in this regard are, first, to give frequent and practical instructions on the subject of Catholic marriage and the Catholic home, and, second, to provide effectively for our young people the social opportunities which will encourage them and enable them to make the acquaintance of Catholic young people, and to choose and be chosen by a Catholic who in other respects is suited to become a helpmate through life's pilgrimage. These two means will help each other. By proper instruction we can get our young people to look on matrimony as they should, as the assuming before God of very sacred obligations, as a contract which is consecrated by the Blood of Christ, and from which flow sublime opportunities and serious duties.

We can impress on them that, for their own happiness and salvation and for the good of their offspring, they should marry a Catholic—and not any sort of a Catholic, but one who will really be a helpmate in leading a good life and in fulfilling the diffi-

cult obligations of parenthood. Our people cannot hear too many instructions on this subject, if they are prudently prepared and interestingly given. If the faithful are not taught as they should be concerning a topic so fundamental and so momentous for themselves and the Church, will they not have a just reason to complain?

A FRUITFUL TOPIC FOR SERMONS

These instructions will give the priest a series of very interesting themes for sermons. The field is a wide one, and the exhortations which young people need on the subject may be brought in at every turn. When the preacher explains the nature and dignity of the Sacrament of Matrimony, he can make many applications concerning the right attitude of young people toward marriage, the prayers they ought to send before them to aid their choice, the light they ought to seek from reason and faith (not from silly sentimentality, nor selfish passion), the reverence they ought to feel for a contract which is sealed with the Blood of Christ and which He Himself has so sanctified as to make it a solemn symbol of the union which exists between Himself and His Church, His heavenly bride.

When the priest explains the laws of marriage, he will find many an occasion to point out how the Church, because of her many centuries of experience, has hemmed about the Sacrament of Matrimony with careful and wise restrictions so that her children may deeply appreciate the importance of the obligations they are assuming and may be safeguarded from marrying in haste and having to repent at

leisure. The people will be very much interested in receiving a clear and simple explanation of the laws of Matrimony as they now exist, because these laws are often the subject of discussion with their non-Catholic friends.

MARRIAGE CASES IN THE PRESS

Quite frequently, too, the parish-priest will find an interesting occasion for such explanations in the marriage cases which are reported in the daily press. A good many Catholics do not quite understand why it is that the Pope sometimes declares a marriage null. It would be well to explain to them, perhaps more than once, that not the Pope himself can dissolve a true marriage once it is consummated, and that, whenever he declares a marriage null, he does so because he has decided that the marriage was never rightly contracted or because it was never consummated. A thorough explanation and defence of the Pauline Privilege would likewise be useful and interesting.

Then, too, is it not the duty of the priest, especially in this age of loose opinions, to fortify his people with the true doctrine of the Church concerning the solemn obligations which the married assume toward each other and toward God? At a time when the hideous specter of birth-control stalks over the land, we should do everything possible to fortify our people against so horrible a monster. This delusion strikes at the very life of the family and the State, and it should not be our fault if our people are not fully informed as to its falsity and evil. By instructing the young people beforehand,

in a prudent and tactful way, concerning the solemn and inevitable responsibilities and obligations which they undertake when they marry, we shall help them to think seriously on this momentous subject and act prudently when it comes to choosing a helpmate for life.

INSTRUCTIONS ABOUT COURTSHIP

Instructions on courtship, and the giving of right principles about the time of engagement and the preparation for receiving so holy a sacrament, will also furnish some interesting and profitable subjects. How many of our people truly realize that courtship is usually a necessary preparation for this sacrament? Do we not sometimes fail to impress on our young people the dignity and holiness of the marriage state? The only calling in life that is superior to it in the eyes of God and the Church is that of voluntary virginity, undertaken for the love of God. But marriage is essentially holy, established by God, and raised by Christ to sacramental dignity. We should keep this in mind in all our instructions, and never let it appear that we think lightly of marriage. If young people once realized that courtship is a preparation for a sacrament, they might be saved from many terrible errors which prove the cause of the deepest regrets and anguish in future life.

Such instructions are the more necessary because the world frankly makes a jest of courtship, surrounds it with sickly sentimentality, considers marriage as a temporary contract with no sanctity whatsoever, and encourages the idea that the normal course for young people is to fall foolishly in love

with each other before they consider the consequences; and, once being in love, to get married whether they are suited to each other or not, and with little thought of the consequences. Such a view affords much exciting material for short stories, best-sellers, and feature films, but it is rather a poor preparation for Catholic marriage. Unless we ourselves instruct our young people as to the right view of courtship, where under heaven will they learn it? We teach them how to prepare themselves for the reception of other sacraments, which they can receive many times during their lives. We shall surely wish to do all in our power to encourage them to prepare as they should for this sacrament which forms a bond that only death can dissolve.

TALKS ON THE HOME

Again, the Catholic home with all its sanctities, its obligations, its opportunities, will give us matter for many a profitable discourse to our people. Our homes are threatened by the spirit of the age, which indeed in many cases has already invaded and spoiled them. The Catholic atmosphere of the home, the abundance of Catholic books which should be there, frequently renewed by the addition of fresh volumes from the Catholic bookstores, the pictures which should adorn the home—pictures at once beautiful and Catholic, for the greatest masters are Catholic, and we are the heirs to the rich Catholic culture of the centuries—the kindliness and peace of the home, the charity of the conversation there, the family prayers in common, the reading aloud of Catholic books, all these things will interest the people

if you put them into brief, fervent conferences, intelligible and persuading.

AIDING SOCIABILITY

So much for our instructions to our young people on this grave matter. But, if we wish them to heed what we say, shall we not have to take definite measures to give them the opportunities for Catholic sociability which will enable them to choose a Catholic partner for life? It is true that very good and pious priests resist this conclusion, at least in practice. They say that it is not the business of the priest to promote social clubs, that his work is spiritual and stops short of providing Catholic sociability. But whoever will study the history of the Church will see that from the apostolic ages priests have been concerned with the material and social life of their people in so far as it affected their spiritual well-being, and this of necessity, because material and social conditions can either greatly hinder or grandly help the spiritual ministrations of the priest.

Not that we mean to say that the priest should undertake to attend himself to the details of social clubs and direct social gatherings. There is no need for that, and it is often very unwise from several standpoints. First, common report has it that some priests are too fond of attending to everything themselves. They involve themselves in a multiplicity of details which they cannot rightly take care of, and they offend and discourage the laity, who would enjoy taking some of these responsibilities. The lay folk rightly grieve to see themselves pushed

aside and left without any work in the parish, while the priest undertakes more than he can attend to.

TACTFUL MANAGEMENT

Then again, the young people themselves are sometimes unwilling to be too much managed by the priest. Of course, it is a question of places and persons and circumstances. One priest can succeed where another fails. But, generally speaking, young people are likely to grow restive if the priest is too much in evidence at their social entertainments, and, besides, trustworthy men and matrons of the congregation can sometimes do more and succeed better than he.

Finally, the legislation of the Church concerning dancing, in particular, not only discourages dances held for the profit of religious causes, but disapproves of the presence of priests at such entertainments. We have it on excellent authority that this legislation does not strike at dancing as such, but only at the holding of dances for the raising of funds for church purposes and the attendance of priests at these affairs. Where the social gatherings are well conducted and innocent and the dances unobjectionable, there is no prohibition thereof. If the right men and women are chosen to direct such dances, they will often be more effective in abating the least sort of misconduct than would be the priest himself.

The dances are only one form of social amusement. We know of one parish where for quite a long time it has been the custom to hold card-parties every week to help toward the support of the school. Of

course, many young people attend and become acquainted, and the priest of the parish told us not long since that some of the best and most edifying Catholic families in the parish, and in no small number either, could be directly traced to the acquaintances and sociability which these card-parties have brought about.

DIFFERING CONDITIONS

Parishes differ so much in their population and circumstances that each priest must to a certain degree work out his own problems in this matter of supplying sociability to his young folk. The small parish has quite a different problem from the large one. Conditions in the country are quite apart from those of the large cities. Plans for promoting sociability have to take into account also the personal equation of the priest and of the helpers whom he can count on. Every priest has to study his own qualities and find out how he can best deal with his people. But there is hardly anyone who cannot make some progress toward solving this problem, if he will only make a start and profit by his failures.

A city is, after all, only a collection of neighborhoods, but modern city life has gone far toward breaking up these neighborhoods and scattering the people abroad for their amusement and sociability to all quarters of the city. If this is a civic disadvantage, depriving the people of all the homely benefits of neighborliness, it is a still more notable disadvantage from a religious standpoint. The parish is a neighborhood organization, designed to gather the people of the neighborhood into a religious unit under the care of their pastor, so that

they may form one great family, and contribute each one something to the parish spirit and to parish activities.

THE PRIEST'S ATTITUDE

This was well enough understood and put into practice in a simpler day, but our highly complex civilization has injured the spirit of parishes in this regard almost as much as it has hurt the integrity of homes. People who look on their parish only as a place where one goes to Mass on Sunday when it is convenient, have certainly lost the parish spirit and are of very little use for the promotion of parish works. Have not some priests contributed toward this condition by taking it too much for granted that to contribute to the support of the parish and to attend religious services complete the duties of the laity? Thus, by showing no anxiety to get their lay folk to become and to remain real parishioners and active members of the parish family, they have helped instead of hindering the disintegration of parish life.

The efforts at promoting sociability which we have mentioned will thus have a twofold benefit. They will counteract the drift away from the parish and enlist the interest of the young folk in parish activities, while at the same time they give them needed opportunities for sociability. We can go in their door and come out our own, because they are naturally attracted by the right sort of amusement and will come to play, it may be, and remain to work or pray, always provided they are rightly handled and are encouraged and not domineered over or forced.

THE INEVITABLE DIFFICULTIES

Of course, we are very much aware of the difficulties and limitations of such activities. The mistake is sometimes made of turning parish societies into mere social clubs, and of emphasizing the amusements at the expense of more unselfish activities. But this is a mere error in proportion. There is no reason why we should not do the one prudently, and at the same time not omit the other. There is a golden mean which it is injurious to overpass in either direction.

Another difficulty, already referred to, is that people do not wish to stay in their neighborhood for amusement. Young people crave to get into a broader sphere of sociability. They grow tired of the parish hall and neighborhood amusements. They are interested in getting in contact with people they have never before seen, and do not wish to associate continually with boys and girls whom they have known ever since they sat on the benches of the parish school. They want to be called "Miss This" and "Mister That," instead of being called just Mary and Tom. This is quite natural, but it does not prevent our having neighborhood entertainments also. If these are made attractive enough, they can compete, at least for some nights of the week, with the commercialized amusements. There is no need of monopolizing our young people entirely, provided we teach them to choose their amusements discreetly.

HOME ENTERTAINMENTS

Again, there are the immense possibilities of home entertainment, which the parish-priest and his lay helpers would do well to utilize. What fun the young people can have at home, and what fun they used to have in the good old days! That was before moving-picture theatres and automobiles and public dance halls and all the alluring array of commercialized amusements drew them forth from their homes, and taught them a habit of going out of nights when they might so much better stay at home and amuse themselves and one another.

The home will always be the natural unit of society, the most wholesome place for young people to find entertainment. To make a home and live in a home is the natural destiny of humankind, and young people are better off and happier there than anywhere else, save only those of course whom still higher ideals have drawn to give up their home as Christ did and follow Him in the religious or priestly life.

A PROMISING PLAN

We have elsewhere mentioned that plan, so successfully followed by one parish-priest, to utilize the homes of his parish for providing much-needed Catholic sociability for his young folk. He asked some of the mothers of the parish who had comfortable and spacious houses to give the use of them for one evening each. Then, every two weeks, a group of his young people met at these houses in succession. A little commitee of mothers, whom the priest could trust, supervised the entertainment, especially

the dancing, and sent everyone off home at eleven o'clock. This simple plan might be used to promote sociability even in large parishes, by districting the parish and then forming as many groups of young people as there were districts and managing each of them as here described.

Another serious objection in the minds of many parish-priests against these efforts to promote parish sociability is the disastrous experience which they have either had personally, or have learned from their fellow-priests when discussing the management of parish halls and social centers. It has happened too often, indeed, that such centers have been erected on a very elaborate scale and at great expense, and have by no means brought the returns that were expected. In fact, some of them have proved decidedly a white elephant. After a while the parish priest has found the people losing interest in them, because they fail to meet expenses and prove much more a source of anxiety than of joy to their promoters.

WELL PLANNED AND MANAGED

This has not been by any means the rule, however, and one finds many parish centers which are used and appreciated by the people. Nor is it always the more elegant and elaborate ones which bring the best results. The fact is that a parish hall should be planned with great care so as to meet the real wishes and needs of that individual parish and not go beyond them. Here especially the priest ought to take the best heads of his parish into counsel, not forgetting to consult the young people themselves and make them feel that they are being considered.

But the management of such a center is more important than the center itself. Sometimes the priest can successfully carry on the management, but experience seems to show that the priestly vocation by no means necessarily includes such a gift of management. Somebody, however, must keep the building clean and serviceable, and give it a pleasant atmosphere for all comers. In the case of elaborate centers, it seems pretty clear that there should be either a very capable and devoted volunteer, or, better and surer still, a thoroughly competent paid worker.

We trust that these remarks may be useful to our devoted priests, at least by way of suggesting still more practical ideas from their own experience. What we have said is inspired by very deep and true interest in both the work of the priests and the welfare of their young folk. If we can by such means as we have described diminish even a little the unhappy number of mixed marriages, how great a service we shall render to the Church and to the souls of our people!

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